



ACCREDITATION COMMISSION FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES

CAB Accreditation Policy Document

Document Title: Policy on Proficiency Testing/Interlaboratory Comparisons

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Revision Number	Revision Date	Paragraph Number	Description of Revision	Revision Author

1.1	Purpose:
1.1.1	To ensure objective evidence of organization's (laboratory /where relevant inspection body) competence to produce data that is both accurate and repeatable for an activities listed in its scope of accreditation is provided to the interested parties as per the relevant requirements of ISO/IEC 17025:2005, ISO 15189:2012, ISO/IEC 17020:2012 and ILAC P9.
1.2	Scope:
1.2.1	To participate in Proficiency Testing (PT) only for the test methods, test technologies or calibrations for which accreditation is being sought and maintained this also includes any PT requirements set by regulators, industry or professional sectors, Regional Cooperation bodies, or other interested parties.
1.2.2	This document is to help and harmonize accreditation bodies, testing laboratories and proficiency testing schemes providers to understand concerning use of PT in the ACCAB accreditation.
1.2.3	In the context of this guidance note, "laboratories" implies all laboratory types – i.e. testing, calibration and medical laboratories.
1.2.4	The ACCAB shall enforce the PT requirements outlined in this documents as part of its recognition as an accrediting body for these programs.
1.2.5	It is acknowledged that there are areas of testing and calibration for which suitable proficiency testing does not exist or is not practical. In such cases, the ACCAB and the applicant / accredited organization shall discuss and agree on suitable alternative means by which performance can be assessed and monitored. This shall be considered as part of the organization's planned PT and/or related activities.
1.3	Definitions:
1.3.1	Proficiency Testing (PT): evaluation of participant performance against pre-established criteria by means of inter-laboratory comparisons.
1.3.2	Inter-laboratory Comparison: organization, performance and evaluation of measurements or tests on the same or similar items by two or more laboratories in accordance with predetermined conditions.
1.3.3	Measurement Technique: The process of testing/calibrating/identifying the property, including any pre-treatment required to present the sample, as received by the laboratory, to the measuring device. (e.g. ICP-MS, Rockwell Hardness, PCR, Microscopy, Force Measurement)
1.3.4	Property: The quantity being measured (e.g. Arsenic, Fat, Creatinine, Length, Hardness, Force)
1.3.5	Product: The item that the measurement technique is being applied. (e.g. Soil, Vegetables, Serum, Polystyrene, Concrete)

1.3.6	Level of Participation: The number of sub-disciplines that an organization identifies within its scope, and therefore the number of specific proficiency tests that should be considered for participation
1.3.7	Frequency of Participation: This is how often a laboratory determines that it needs to participate in PT for a given sub-discipline, this may vary from sub-discipline to sub-discipline within a laboratory and between laboratories with the same sub-disciplines
1.3.8	Sub-discipline: An area of technical competence defined by a minimum of one Measurement Technique, Property and Product, which are related. (e.g. Determination of Arsenic in soil by ICP-MS)
1.4	Details:
1.4.1	The ACCAB Accreditation Applicant & Accredited Organization shall conduct PT in accordance with their normal testing/calibration and reporting procedures, unless otherwise specified in the instructions from the proficiency test provider. The item/sample that an organization chooses for PT must be one that is suitable to demonstrate the competence of the organization for the main field of activities.
1.4.2	The organization shall also ensure that PT samples are equally distributed among the personnel, trained and qualified for the relevant tests regularly reviewed in response to changes in staffing, methodology, instrumentation etc.
1.4.3	Unless otherwise specified within this document or in the ACCAB general requirements for PT participation is required for at least one proficiency testing activity per year.
1.4.4	All accredited organization must participate in relevant and available proficiency testing at a frequency sufficient to ensure that all major sub-disciplines and materials/matrices/product types (as defined in each section) on the scope(s) of accreditation are covered over their accreditation period.
1.4.5	They shall have a documented plan of how they intend to cover the applicable program requirements or the major sub-disciplines and materials/matrices/product types (as defined in this guidance note) on their scope of accreditation period.
1.4.6	This plan shall cover any commercially available participation and any inter-laboratory organized studies, as applicable.
1.4.7	The plan must also address the laboratory's process for submission of proficiency testing results and related corrective action responses promptly to ACCAB.
1.4.8	Applicant laboratories for ACCAB accreditation must be able to demonstrate successful participation in at least one relevant and available Proficiency Testing Options (: [A]. participation in proficiency testing programs sponsored by a third party provider [B] inter laboratory comparisons [C] intra laboratory comparisons [D] repeatability studies [E] regular use of certified reference materials and/or internal quality control using secondary reference materials) prior to receiving accreditation.
1.4.9	The laboratories are expected to document their analysis of all results, and to submit the results,

	and the subsequent analysis, of all relevant proficiency testing participation to ACCAB promptly.	
1.4.10	Detailed corrective action responses for any outlying or unacceptable results related to testing/calibration on their scope of accreditation must also be submitted.	
1.4.11	The PT participation and performance (in particular constantly poor performance), will be reviewed and utilized during the assessment and accreditation decision-making process by the ACCAB. This may also include possibilities of varied surveillance intervals where performance is consistently good.	
1.4.12	The organization is not required to inform ACCAB regarding participation in a PT which is outside the scope of the ACCAB accreditation.	
1.4.13	The ACCAB shall endeavour to coordinate with the PT providers and publish the list of such and update organization on its website www.accab.org from time to time.	
1.5	References:	
1.5.1	Details	Document Number
1.5.1.1	ILAC Policy for Participation in Proficiency Testing Activities	ILAC-P9:06/2014
1.5.1.2	Conformity assessment - General requirements for proficiency testing	ISO/IEC 17043:2010
1.5.1.3	Guidance on the level and frequency of proficiency testing participation	EA-4/18:2010
1.5.1.4	Proficiency Testing Frequency Benchmarks	APLAC PT 006:09/10