



**ACCREDITATION COMMISSION FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES**

**CAB Accreditation Guidance Document**

**Document Title: Frequently Asked Questions**

**Document Number: ACCAB-GD-5.0**

**CONTROLLED COPY**

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Paragraph Number</b>	<b>Description of Revision</b>	<b>Revision Author</b>

### **Q1: What is ACCAB?**

A1: ACCAB is the acronym for Accreditation Commission for Conformity Assessment Bodies. Accreditation Commission for Conformity Assessment Bodies (ACCAB) is a trading name for Accreditation Commission For Conformity Assessment Bodies Private Limited a company limited by shares established in terms of Companies Act, 1956, Republic of India.

ACCAB is an independent, international Accreditation Body (AB).

The authority vested in ACCAB is that assigned to them by the Conformity Assessment Bodies and other Organization it accredits and recognizes by virtue of these applicant and accredited bodies pledging support for the mission and objectives of ACCAB and ensuring that their actions are according to that policy. It is an independent, impartial and non-governmental body and makes no claim to be connected with any government. The ACCAB started operating from September 2010.

### **Q 2: What is the objective of ACCAB ?**

A 2: To promote advancement of SQAM (Standardization, Quality, and Accreditation & Metrology), which protect the interest of the Global Communities of Businesses & Consumers.

To establish itself as a lead non-government - private sector Trade Support Institution as per the policy of International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO) to provide a proactive, transparent, impartial and credible accreditation and recognition to conformity assessment service providers in the field of quality, environmental, sustainability, occupational health & safety, food safety, information security & technology, testing, calibration, research .....and education service providers globally.

To accredit organizations in accordance with trade and industry accepted criteria, international standards, guides and other normative documents and continue to comply itself with the relevant international criteria.

To cooperate with national and international peer organizations on the conditions for accreditation and issues relating to accreditation as per the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade to ensure that regulations, standards, testing, certification and accreditation procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles.

### **Q 3: What is Accreditation?**

A 3: Webster defines accreditation as "to give trust or confidence to; to vouch for; to recommend; to furnish with credentials, as an envoy or ambassador"

According to ISO/IEC 17011:2004 Accreditation means: Third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific assessment tasks. ACCAB accreditation of the Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) and Further Training / Educational Institutions conveys formal demonstration to carry out specific certification, inspection, registration verification/validation, assessment, testing, calibration and Training/Educational activities. This independent assessment and recognition of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) and Further Training / Educational Institutions may allow the accredited organizations tests, inspection reports and certificates to be recognized as equivalent to organizations in other countries.

### **Q 4: Why seek an Accreditation?**

A 4: The world is moving towards a free market, where customers require that the suppliers of goods and services meet their needs and expectations in an effective and efficient manner. And the customers and their competing suppliers both depend on the compliance mechanism based on conformity assessment to the various specifications, requirements and standards. This phenomenon has thrown open new challenge of eliminating unnecessary and costly trade barriers.

Recognizing the need of equivalency across boundaries, many governments across the globe are redefining their role from controller to facilitator and the trade and industries now mind their businesses with the self regulation. Although governments might provide polices to ensure that the goods, services and environment fulfills the peoples' needs, the voluntary participation of private sector with clear customer focus ensures the production and delivery as such.

ACCAB has the clear focus on these private sector Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) and Further Training and Educational Institutions who require less policing and more support to ensure that the goods and services meet the requirements and expectations of the global communities of businesses and consumers.

Accreditation is a voluntary process. However, formal third party attestation of a Conformity Assessment Body may become further desirable for demonstrating its competence. Accreditation enables it to do this.

#### **Q 5: What is present Accreditation model?**

A 5: It's the universal belief system that all certification bodies are equal and also a certification body is equal to all at all the times. In all probability this is not so. The challenge is the need to address the conflict of interest that occurs when a certification body is required to **FAIL** a client who has paid to be certified. Another challenge is the inevitable tension (desirable) objective for a certification body to cut cost verses (undesirable) risk that a certification body will cut corners to achieve this objective and ultimately undermine the reliability of certification decision. If certification body is imperfect, leaving room for variations in certification body's performance, why should the process of accreditation (certifying the certifiers) be any more reliable? Wouldn't one expect the same level of variation between different accreditation bodies? If there is any reason to doubt that all accreditations are equally reliable , then what confidence can one have that the certificate issued under one accreditation system is at par with one issued under another accreditation system. Without this basic confidence, how can one achieve the goal of "**certified once accepted everywhere** "

The reason for the National Accreditation Body (NAB) model is that the NAB would be more reliable as it would be free from the pressure to compete, with other accreditation bodies on cost. Meaning that NAB is not under any pressure to cut cost by cutting corners. But the question is- are the NABs passing on these cost benefit to their accredited certification bodies and thereby to the certificated organizations and to the common man on the street? On the contrary the national accreditation model is not market friendly as there is no competitive pressure on them to provide an efficient and cost effective service, turning them into bureaucratic and autocratic machinery. Their close relationship with the Government makes many people comfortable (mostly the people at the helm of the NABs and the beneficiaries of the Government incentives & schemes) at the same time ask those people who have faced their arrogance stemming from their inglorious position.

If we presume that in all probability that all NABs interpret the ISO standard in same way then why Government and their NABs consider as providing an equivalent service subjecting the certification bodies operating in different economies bearing the cost and burden of these multiple accreditations. In reality a certification body that operates internationally is currently required to have multiple accreditations from different NABs, each of which is in theory providing the same guarantee that the certification body is competent to implement the requirements of the same ISO standards. This nationally based system has made the certification business uncompetitive and burdensome.

#### **Q 6: Does ACCAB have different Accreditation model?**

A 6: The ACCAB accreditation approach is proactive and flexible as it focuses on outcomes rather than being prescriptive and bureaucratic. ACCAB perfectly understands that the most of the ISO management standards are subject to different interpretations and thus their implementations. With the ISO management standards, one cannot have “**one size fits all**” approach. The ACCAB welcomes multiple perspectives and interpretations of the ISO standards applied to the conformity assessment, which it believes will eventually benefit all the stakeholders.

ACCAB follows the international accreditation model, which was pioneered by the International Federation of Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) & subsequently followed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Social Accountability International (SAI), International Automotive Task Force (IATF) and others. None of these accreditation bodies are the members of IAF. Thus allowing ACCAB accredited certification bodies to operate nationally, regionally or globally without having to go for multiple accreditations regimens. As all these accreditation bodies have achieved their international stature without being members of IAF, the ACCAB aims to achieve the same with its thought leadership.

The ACCAB is **NOT** against International Accreditation Forum (IAF), in fact ACCAB appreciates and applauds IAF body of work, in support of the global conformity assessment. We therefore took a conscientious decision to approach IAF for a specific permission to use its publications/documents/guide lines for the ACCAB applicants and the accredited CABs who wish to implement these requirements/guidelines voluntarily.

The ACCAB has a policy to cooperate with national & international peer organizations on the conditions for accreditation and issues related to the accreditations as per the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on technical barrier to trade, to ensure that the regulations, standards, testing, certification and accreditation procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles. In line with this policy ACCAB accepts accreditation from any accreditation body, who operates according to ISO 17011:2004, as equivalent, regardless whether they are the members of IAF or not, eliminating need for comprehensive/full, repeatable and unproductive accreditation assessments.

The ACCAB accreditation practice would provide in depth, confidential, onsite evaluation of the certification body’s programs and processes as normally PEERS REVIEWS DO. The ACCAB believes in open source code approach where people who have inclination and competence would work together for the betterment of the system, which would ultimately benefit the man on the street.

**Q 7: Does ACCAB have International Accreditation Forum (IAF) membership ?**

**A 7: No.**

**Q 7.1 If no, then why?**

A 7.1 ACCAB is cognizant of the activities of the IAF and applauds & supports efforts of the IAF to enhance the accreditation and the conformity assessment worldwide.

ACCAB has received an excellent cooperation and support from the IAF as the IAF has officially permitted the ACCAB to use its publications and also promptly provided clarifications on various issues pertaining to the IAF activities and accreditation matters raised by the ACCAB on the various occasions.

From the policy documents of IAF posted on the IAF website, ACCAB understands that IAF policies do not permit more than one accreditation body offering the same scope of accreditation from each country/economy. Therefore the competition between accreditation bodies with different commercial

models but similar technical competence is prevented. In some countries, this may be considered as a restrictive practice.

ACCAB is aware that the membership of IAF does have benefits in terms of the credibility and prestige that such organizations may have built up in the marketplace even though these benefits may be SUBJECTIVE and may be misused by its Accreditation Body Members and Certification Bodies accredited by them for their own commercial benefit and in such cases disappointing in view of the contribution that the Accreditation Bodies who are not members of the IAF can make to the world trade and may deprive the benefits of the accreditation services offered by the non members to the various stakeholders.

ACCAB is aware that some of the Accreditation Body Members of IAF using their IAF membership status which is of exclusive in nature to create and maintain their dominant position in the market and barriers to the trade. These certain accreditation members of IAF are trying to give impression to the public that since ACCAB is not a member of IAF, its credibility is in doubt, even though this propaganda is not supported by any factual evidence. Whereas IAF in its communication to ACCAB has categorically mentioned that the IAF membership is not mandatory and they are not aware of any statistical data or survey regarding the credibility of members as well as non-members of IAF.

ACCAB is aware that the authority of many international organizations is not protected by any particular law or article of legislation. Most of them are basically consortium / associations incorporated in some part of the world. However, their good intentions and efforts are overshadowed by the deliberate marketing pitch made by their exclusive members that their membership is 'The Requirement' and using that as the basis for "The Judgment" about the credibility of the non-members.

ACCAB follows the international accreditation model, which was pioneered by the International Federation of Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) & subsequently followed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Social Accountability International (SAI), International Automotive Task Force (IATF) and others. None of these accreditation bodies are the members of IAF.

ACCAB has a policy to cooperate with all the national and international peer organizations and associations on the conditions for the accreditation and the issues relating to accreditation as per the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade to ensure that regulations, standards, testing, certification and accreditation procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles. Hence, declares its intention to cooperate with the International Accreditation Forum and any such organizations on these matters and open to the IAF model of the peer review, which is used by the members of IAF as the basis to establish their so called credibility, which we feel that it needs to be transparent to the outsiders.

**Q 8: Is ACCAB member of any other organization? Do they have any international agreements in place?**

ACCAB is an Affiliate Member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC).

ACCAB has recently asked for a specific permission from ILAC to use its publications/documents/guidelines for the benefit of its applicant and accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies, which has been officially granted by the ILAC.

ACCAB has recently asked for a specific permission from the International Accreditation

Forum(IAF) to use its publications/documents/guidelines for the benefit of its applicant and accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies, which has been officially granted by the IAF.

ACCAB also has got a specific permission from ISO for using ISO 9001:2008 Auditing Practices Group & Accreditation Auditing Practices Group for using their documentation/publications.

**Q 9: What is the geographical scope of the ACCAB accreditation services?**

A 9: The ACCAB is an International Accreditation Body and its services are available globally.