



## Laboratory Accreditation is a means of determining, recognising and promoting technical competence.



laboratories as if they themselves had undertaken the accreditation of the other partner's laboratories.

Over 40 laboratory accreditation bodies have signed a multi-lateral recognition agreement called the ILAC Arrangement, which greatly enhances the acceptance of data across the national borders of the signatory countries. Full details for the ILAC Arrangement and the list of signatories can be found on the ILAC website at [www.ilac.org](http://www.ilac.org).

This system of international MRAs between accreditation bodies has enabled accredited laboratories to achieve a form of international recognition, and allowed data accompanying exported goods to be more readily accepted on overseas markets. This effectively reduces costs for both the manufacturer and the importers, as it reduces or eliminates the need for products to be retested in another country.

Countries without viable accreditation systems can seek to have their laboratories accredited by established accreditation systems, so that their test data and associated goods can be accepted on foreign markets. These countries can also endeavour to develop their own accreditation system based on the structure and experience of established systems in other countries.

### WHAT TYPES OF LABORATORIES CAN SEEK ACCREDITATION?

If you are considering seeking accreditation for your facility, the first thing you'll need to do is contact the appropriate accreditation body to see whether they can accredit your range of testing services.

Most national accreditation bodies can provide comprehensive accreditation for:

- ◆ facilities undertaking any sort of testing, product or material evaluation, calibration or measurement;
- ◆ private or government laboratories;
- ◆ one-person operations or large multi-disciplinary organisations;
- ◆ remote field operations and temporary laboratories.

### HOW DO LABORATORIES BECOME ACCREDITED?

Laboratories can have either all or part of their testing and calibration activities accredited. The accreditation process involves a thorough evaluation of all the elements of a laboratory that contribute to the production of accurate and reliable test data.

The evaluation process can take one to several days, and involves the use of specialist technical assessors who evaluate the specific types of testing or

measurement being performed. The assessment criteria are based on the international standards ISO/IEC 17025 or ISO 15189, which are used for evaluating laboratories throughout the world. Laboratory accreditation bodies use this standard specifically to assess factors relevant to a laboratory's ability to produce precise, accurate test and calibration data, including the:

- ◆ technical competence of staff
- ◆ validity and appropriateness of test methods
- ◆ traceability of measurements and calibrations to national standards
- ◆ suitability, calibration and maintenance of test equipment
- ◆ testing environment
- ◆ sampling, handling and transportation of test items
- ◆ quality assurance of test and calibration data

At the end of the assessment a detailed report on the evaluation is presented to the laboratory, highlighting any areas that require attention and corrective action prior to the laboratory being recommended for accreditation.

Once accredited, the laboratory is re-evaluated periodically to ensure its continued compliance with requirements, and to check that its standard of operation is being maintained. The laboratory may also be required to participate in relevant proficiency testing programs between reassessments, as a further demonstration of technical competence.

### WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on how to become accredited, you will need to contact the appropriate laboratory accreditation body. To find out if your country has one or more laboratory accreditation bodies, try contacting your national standards body or your ministry for industry or technology. Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, you can visit the website of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) at [www.ilac.org](http://www.ilac.org) and use the directory of laboratory accreditation bodies available on this website.

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ILAC

ILAC is the peak international authority on laboratory accreditation, with a membership consisting of accreditation bodies and affiliated organisations throughout the world. Its internet site at [www.ilac.org](http://www.ilac.org) can provide a range of information on laboratory accreditation, as well as the location of its members world-wide.

For more information contact the ILAC Secretariat, PO Box 7507, Silverwater NSW 2128, Australia Fax +61 2 9743 5311 Email: [ilac@nata.asn.au](mailto:ilac@nata.asn.au)



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