



International Management Accreditation Board

Address : 51, Goldhill Plaza, #07-10/11, Singapore 308900
E-mail : info@imacb.com, customersupport@imacb.com
Website : www.imacb.com

Participation in Inter Laboratory Comparisons and Proficiency Testing Policy

1. Purpose

This document describes the policy of Accreditation Committee regarding the proficiency testing and inter-laboratory comparisons schemes and participation of testing and calibration laboratories in these schemes.

2. References

The present document refers to:

- Guideline itself laid down by the board for requirement compliance
- Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005 paragraph 5.9.1.
- Standard ISO/IEC 17011:2003 paragraphs 7.2.2 (b); 7.8.6 (j) and 7.15

This document provides definitions below according to ISO/IEC Guide 43-1:1997

- The proficiency testing is the determination of the performance of the laboratory through inter-laboratory comparisons.
- Inter laboratory comparisons is the organizations, effectuation and evaluation of tests on the same sample or on similar samples by two or more laboratories in compliance with predetermined conditions.

3. Admission criteria of the proficiency testing providers.

3.1 IMAB accepts those proficiency testing providers who comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC Guide 43-1:1997. The providers of these schemes must implement a quality management system which ensures the fulfilment of requirements included in the above documents.

3.2 IMAB accepts providers which are accredited according ISO/IEC Guide 43-1.

3.3 When the schemes of the proficiency testing are organized by a non-accredited provider, the laboratory taking part must have assessed the provider according to requirements of standards and guides mentioned in 3.1. The compatibility of the provider is demonstrated by the preparation of the documented information related to:

- Implementation of quality management system
- Confirmed experience in organization of proficiency testing schemes.
- Information on preparation and treatment of samples
- The analysis of the testing data and definition of performance of the laboratory
- Definition of the reference values and reference uncertainties from testing and calibration laboratories to demonstrate the traceability of their measurements in accordance to requirements of ISO/IEC 17015:2005.

The above information is collected from the participating laboratory and assessed by IMAB.



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4. Obligations of testing/calibration laboratory

- 4.1** Testing/calibration accredited laboratories or applicant, must demonstrate their performance by participating in appropriate schemes of proficiency through inter laboratory comparisons organized from reliable providers according to criteria shown in the point 3.
- 4.2** IMAB is obliged to inform the accredited laboratories and applicants about organized schemes. This information could be also obtained from the web page of IMAB.
- 4.3** The participation of a laboratory in at least 1 inter-laboratory comparison for the type of testing/calibration of the laboratory seeking accreditation is a precondition for issuance of accreditation. IMAB takes into consideration the frequency and the possibility of organizing such tests. The assessment from IMAB of the performance of the laboratory is made according to point no. 5.
- 4.4** In between two assessments from IMAB, the laboratory must take part in at least one proficiency testing in such a frequency to guarantee its performance on main analysis within the accreditation field. The main analyses are determined by IMAB in cooperation with the laboratory also taking into account the opportunity of organizing such tests.
- 4.5** IMAB encourages the accredited laboratories and also the applicants to take part in the proficiency testing schemes organized from providers complying with the abovementioned conditions of point 3.
- 4.6** In between two assessment the participation of the laboratory is even more important in cases when there are doubts about the technical competence of the laboratory (like: changes of personnel, inappropriateness of methods being used, unsatisfactory results from previous testing, etc.)
- 4.7** The accredited laboratories and those under assessment are responsible for identification of proficiency testing.

5. Use of results in the assessment of the laboratory

- 5.1** The assessment of the results from the participation of the laboratory in the scheme is carried out from the team of assessors of IMAB. The lead assessor includes on its final report a brief evaluation of the performance of the laboratory, by also attaching the results.
- 5.2** The results of participation in the proficiency schemes are taken into account in the proposal for issuing accreditation. The following rules are used to assess results:
- A successful participation of the laboratory is considered positive in the final proposal for granting accreditation.
 - In cases when the laboratory presents a low percentage of unsuccessful results compared to overall results, the assessment team assesses corrective actions and their effectiveness. If the interpretation and the actions of the laboratory were appropriate, the proposal for granting accreditation is not influenced from the unsuccessful results in the proficiency testing and the laboratory is requested to take part again in a relevant test until the next surveillance visit.
 - If the laboratory presents unsuccessful results in the overwhelming part of the proficiency testing, the final proposal may request the limitation of the accreditation scope until an eventual successful participation of the lab in the relevant tests.

The results from the proficiency testing are not considered as sole criteria to issue accreditation, but they help to formulate an objective opinion about the technical competence of the laboratory.