ISAB Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (Arrangements): Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of an Accreditation Body

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The international accreditation community and the International Standards & Accreditation Board (ISAB) cooperate to establish worldwide Multilateral Mutual Recognition Arrangements (Arrangements). A principal objective of ISAB is to demonstrate the equivalence of the outcomes of its recognised Member Accreditation Bodies through these Arrangements, ensuring that the equivalent competence of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) accredited by these Accreditation Bodies is demonstrated globally.

PURPOSE

To provide ISAB and its recognised Regional Groups with general requirements for evaluating single Accreditation Bodies for the purpose of signing applicable Arrangement(s). Regional Groups and ISAB shall follow these requirements and their procedures shall be consistent with those specified in this document.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope

This document identifies requirements for the evaluation of an Accreditation Body seeking membership or renewal within the ISAB Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).

1.2 Definitions

- **Accreditation Body (AB):** An organisation that operates an accreditation system for one or more types of Conformity Assessment Bodies and is a member of ISAB.

- **Arrangement:** The Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of ISAB or a recognised Regional Group.
- **Peer Evaluation:** A structured process of evaluation of an Accreditation Body by representatives of Accreditation Body Peer Evaluators against specified requirements.
- **Evaluation Team Leader (TL):** A person responsible for leading a team in the evaluation of an accreditation body.
- **Evaluation Team Member (TM):** A person serving on a team in the evaluation of an accreditation body with a specific task.

2. REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Confidentiality

- **2.1.1** All oral and written information and data received about the AB relating to evaluations (including information created during the evaluation process), appeals, and complaints shall be treated confidentially by all parties and persons concerned.
- **2.1.2** The AB under evaluation and the evaluation team shall agree on how all access and information provided by the AB shall be dealt with following the completion of the evaluation and decision-making process.

2.3 General Requirements for an Accreditation Body

- **2.3.1** An AB shall comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 and mandatory documents of ISAB, as applicable.
- **2.3.3** An AB shall have demonstrated experience in the assessment of its CABs and have carried out at least one accreditation procedure (one file, independent of the outcome of the accreditation process) when applying for Peer Evaluation in each of the scopes of the Arrangement for which it applies.
- **2.3.8** An AB shall contribute its fair share of personnel resources for carrying out peer evaluations at regional and/or international level.

2.6 Notification Requirements for an Accreditation Body

Each AB Signatory to an Arrangement shall report changes, which may significantly affect its status and/or operating practices, including the impact of these changes, without delay to ISAB. Significant changes include those affecting competence, impartiality, and credibility.

3. PROCEDURES FOR SELECTION, QUALIFICATION AND MONITORING OF EVALUATORS

- **3.1 Initial Selection and Training:** Candidates nominated to become Peer Evaluators must undergo formal training covering evaluation procedures, techniques, and feedback mechanisms, followed by on-the-job observation as a Trainee Evaluation Team Member (TTM).
- **3.2-3.4 Progression:** Progression from TTM to Team Member (TM), Deputy Team Leader (DTL), and Team Leader (TL) requires successful evaluations, positive feedback from evaluated ABs, and approval by the Management Committee (MC).
- **3.5 Monitoring:** The competency of every Evaluator shall be re-evaluated and reconfirmed at least once every five years.

4. TYPICAL EVALUATION PROGRAM - PRE-EVALUATION

If determined necessary by ISAB or the applicant AB, a pre-evaluation program is conducted based on documentation submitted at least one month in advance. It reviews management system procedures, legal identification, impartiality, technical expertise access, assessor records, and sampling of CAB assessment records.

5. TYPICAL EVALUATION PROGRAM - FULL EVALUATION

- **5.1-5.3 General:** Full evaluations (Initial, Re-evaluation, Scope Extension) collect sufficient information across all accreditation processes to establish confidence in the AB. All team members must access documentation at least 3 months in advance.
- **5.4 Risk-Based Planning:** Evaluation planning takes into account risk indicators such as organization size, complexity, staff-turnover, number of internal technical staff versus accredited CABs, and maturity.
- **5.4.4 Witnessing:** Each Level 3 accreditation standard should be witnessed in every regular peer evaluation, with at least 50% of all Level 3 activities covered by the Signatory status covered in every re-evaluation.
- **5.4.5 File Review:** A representative sample of files shall be reviewed during the peer

evaluation for every Level 3 scope and sub-scope.

6. PROCEDURE FOR DECISION MAKING REGARDING EVALUATIONS

- **6.1-6.2 Review Group (RevG):** Prior to decision-making, a Review Group consisting of independent, impartial individuals reviews the final peer evaluation report, corrective actions, and process.
- **6.3-6.4 Decision Making:** The Decision-Making Group (DMG) takes final decisions (Approval, Approval with conditions, Deferral pending corrective actions, New evaluation, or Suspension/Withdrawal). No AB personnel or active peer evaluators for that specific evaluation may participate in the decision-making.

7. PROCEDURE FOR RE-EVALUATION

A re-evaluation On-site shall commence before the end of the 4-year peer-evaluation cycle (+/- 3 months) from the initial peer-evaluation date. Re-evaluation visits should be conducted by an evaluation team where the majority of members did not participate in the previous full evaluation.

8. PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL

If findings are not appropriately addressed, critical non-conformities are found, or substantiated complaints arise, the MC reports to the DMG to recommend suspension (maximum 6 months) or withdrawal from the Arrangement. Detailed notification rules and rights of appeal apply prior to enactment.

9. DISCLOSURE OF PEER EVALUATION REPORTS

Reports from peer evaluations are strictly confidential and shall not be made available in the public domain unless explicitly requested by the evaluated AB, supported by the MC, and approved collectively after formal DMG decision.

10. EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS

In case of extraordinary situations ("Force Majeure" / act of God, pandemics, war, natural disasters), ISAB may deviate from standard requirements and apply risk-based alternative evaluation methodologies such as remote assessment techniques or adjusted witnessing frequencies.