



Procedure for Joint and Concurrent Evaluations by APLAC and PAC

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NOTE: This document is the first issue of a new Joint APLAC / PAC procedure.

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Scope

This procedure applies to joint and concurrent evaluations undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (APLAC) and Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC) at the request of accreditation bodies.

A: Preamble

A significant proportion of accreditation bodies in the Asia Pacific region are signatories to both the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) and PAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA). Where it is requested and logistically feasible, the APLAC MRA Council and PAC MLA Management Committee (PAC MLA MC) can co-operate on joint or concurrent evaluation activities. The drivers for this are the recognition of the integration of accreditation services within accreditation bodies that are signatories to both Arrangements and a need for consistent evaluation outcomes, reduced inconvenience and possibly reduced costs to the accreditation body being evaluated. However, these benefits cannot interfere with the conduct of an effective evaluation by either Regional Group in accordance with their respective criteria and procedures.

Joint and concurrent evaluations can be described as follows:

- Joint evaluations –A single integrated evaluation team under a single Team Leader and producing a single evaluation report for use by both Regional Groups.
- Concurrent evaluations –A combined evaluation team taking responsibility for the opening meeting and evaluation of the management system elements, while supporting concurrent but independent evaluations of the operational elements, usually with a two part closing meeting.

Joint evaluations or concurrent evaluations may be applied to scheduled re-evaluations of current APLAC MRA and PAC MLA signatories including the evaluation of applications for expansion of MRA/MLA scope in either or both Regional Groups. Pre-evaluations of new signatory applicants will generally be carried out independently and requests for joint or concurrent evaluations on applicant accreditation bodies will be decided on the merits, practicality and acceptance by the applicant AB (refer to B1).

B: General Provisions

B1 Joint evaluations or concurrent evaluations are voluntary. Signatory members or applicants may not wish to have joint or concurrent evaluations and thus the activities undertaken by each of the Regional Groups will continue independently.

B1.1 An applicant requesting a joint or concurrent evaluation should advise the APLAC MRA Council Chair and the PAC MLA MC Chair at the earliest opportunity, but normally at least 12 months prior to the evaluation indicating:

- (a) The type of evaluation being requested i.e. joint evaluation or concurrent evaluation.

- (b) The proposed date (month/year) for the activity;
- (c) The proposed scope of the evaluation for each of the Regional Groups (refer to APLAC and PAC websites for current MRA/MLA scopes recognized under APLAC and PAC).

B1.2 A signatory requesting a joint or concurrent evaluation should advise the APLAC MRA Council Chair and the PAC MLA MC Chair, in writing at the earliest opportunity, but normally at least 24 months prior to the scheduled re-evaluation, indicating:

- (a) The type of evaluation being requested i.e. joint evaluation or concurrent evaluation.
- (b) The proposed date (month/year) for the joint activity noting that the dates scheduled for the next evaluations by APLAC and PAC may not coincide and generally one of the evaluations will need to be bought forward to accommodate the joint activity
(Note: It is unlikely either cooperation will agree to defer a scheduled evaluation beyond the specified 4 year interval. However, other proposals may be considered and approved by both the APLAC MRA Council and the PAC MLA MC on a case by case basis).
- (c) The proposed scope of the evaluation for each of the Regional Groups (refer to APLAC and PAC websites for current MRA/MLA scopes recognized under APLAC and PAC).

B2 The APLAC MRA Council and PAC MLA MC Chairs, in consultation with the accreditation body, will assess the practicality of the request. The APLAC MRA Council Chair will formulate a recommendation to the APLAC MRA Council and the PAC MLA MC Chair will formulate a recommendation to the MLA MC. For joint evaluations, the following should be considered during the consultation:

- (a) Is the proposed date for the joint activity likely to be acceptable to both the MRA Council and MLA MC? This applies equally to concurrent evaluations.
- (b) Will the size of the team required to cover the requested collective scopes be manageable? Normally, a team of nine, including a Team Leader, is considered a maximum. APLAC and PAC require (APLAC MR006, s3 and PAC-MLA-002, s8) at least one evaluator for each major area of the proposed scope under the relevant MRAs/MLAs (testing, calibration, inspection, ISO 15189, RMP, PTP, each type of management systems, product, personnel, greenhouse gases), but often more than one is included for larger programmes such as testing or calibration to get sufficient coverage.
- (c) Will the size of the accreditation body and the geographic size of the economy allow for the effective management of a potentially large joint evaluation team?
- (d) Potential Team Leader(s) and Deputy Team Leader(s) (see below).
- (e) The primary evaluation procedures and evaluation report format to be used i.e. APLAC's or PAC's (refer to C3.1 and C3.3).

It is likely that in many instances, the required team size and the scarcity of evaluators who can fulfil more than one role (area of expertise) will prevent a positive recommendation for conducting a joint evaluation, but a concurrent evaluation could be proposed if there were benefits in doing so.

B3 Once a recommendation is agreed between all parties, this is forwarded to the respective MRA Council/MLA MC for approval (APLACMR006 and PAC-MLA-002).

C: Joint Evaluations

C1 Appointment of Team Leader(s)

Once the APLAC MRA Council and the PAC MLA MC agree on a joint evaluation, a single Team Leader, and Deputy Team Leader if needed, shall be appointed to co-ordinate and manage the evaluation activities. The selection and appointment of Team Leaders will be on a case by case basis as determined by the Regional Groups.

In cases where a Lead Evaluator of both Regional Groups is appointed as the Team Leader, then he / she is responsible for the management of the evaluation in accordance with the evaluation procedure of the Regional Group that is agreed by both Regional Groups. The Regional Groups shall determine whether a Deputy Team Leader is needed.

In cases where a Lead Evaluator from a Regional Group is appointed as the Team Leader, the Regional Group not providing the Team Leader shall appoint one of its Lead Evaluators to the team to act as Deputy Team Leader.

The roles of each these two appointments are as follows:

Team Leader

In addition to the roles and responsibilities of a Team Leader as specified in their Regional Group's own procedures (e.g. APLAC MR001, s8 or PAC-MLA-005, s4), the Team Leader shall:

- Co-operate with the Deputy Team Leader (if appointed from the other Regional Group) to ensure the requirements and expectations of the other Regional Group's evaluation procedures can be accommodated into the evaluation programme;
- Co-ordinate with the accreditation body to ensure the requirements of each Regional Group's evaluation requirements and expectations are met;
- Co-ordinate and manage the activities of the full team during the course of the evaluation;
- Co-ordinate (with the Deputy Team Leader if appointed) the preparation of the evaluation report;
- Co-ordinate (with the Deputy Team Leader if appointed) the review of the accreditation body's response to any findings detailed in the evaluation report. This also relates to the review of responses to any findings from follow-up evaluations;

- With the assistance of the Deputy Team Leader, if appointed, provide a recommendation from the full team to each of the APLAC MRA Council and PAC MLA MC, including the evaluation documentation to the regional co-operation Secretariats.

Note: For concurrent evaluations, all responsibilities listed under the Deputy Team leader will also be applicable to each Team Leader.

Deputy Team Leader

The Deputy Team Leader is responsible, in co-ordination with the Team Leader, for ensuring the specific evaluation process requirements of the Regional Co-operation they represent are carried out. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- Informing the Team Leader of any specific requirements and providing resources to complete the joint or concurrent evaluations successfully;
- Ensure appropriate evaluators are appointed to the team to evaluate the scope(s) to be evaluated under their Regional Group's MRA/MLA;
- Assist the Team Leader in mentoring of any trainee or provisional team members.
- Advise the Team Leader (and ultimately the accreditation body) of the expectations around the number and type of assessments (within their Regional Group's scope of the evaluation) to be witnessed during the evaluation;
- Assist the Team Leader in the finalisation of the evaluation plan, ensuring activities critical to their Regional Group's signatory criteria are evaluated by appropriately trained evaluators;
- Co-ordinate, finalise & classify the evaluation findings specific to their Regional Group's scope of the evaluation;
- Assist and advise the Team Leader on the preparation of a summary report and consolidated list of findings for presentation at the evaluation closing meeting;
- Assist the Team Leader with the preparation of the evaluation report, ensuring any specific requirements their Regional Group may have in this regard are included (and the provision of suitable text where necessary);
- Co-ordinate the evaluation team's review of the accreditation body's response to any findings specific to their Regional Group's scope of the evaluation. This also relates to the review of responses to any findings from follow-up evaluations;
- Assist the Team Leader in formulating a recommendation from all the team members representing their respective MRA Council/MLA MC.

C2 Appointment of the Team Members

In addition to the Team Leader, and Deputy Team Leader if needed, each Regional Group will appoint (in accordance with its own procedures) a sufficient number of its own evaluators to cover the respective scopes. The respective responsible persons shall coordinate to ensure the most effective composition is considered. Note: Ideally, more than one evaluator should not be appointed from the same economy (refer to IAF/ILAC A2, 1.6.1.6 Note 3).

C3 Evaluation Procedures

C3.1 In general, the evaluation procedures to be followed for an initial, re-evaluation or follow-up evaluation will generally be those of the Regional Group which provides the Team Leader. In cases where a Team Leader who is a Lead Evaluator of both Regional Groups is appointed, then the evaluation procedure to be used shall be agreed by the Regional Groups. Relevant procedure of the other Regional Group may also be added, if deemed necessary and appropriate.

Where any significant differences in process are identified, these shall be resolved in a co-operative manner between the Team Leader, the Deputy Team Leader, if appointed, and the accreditation body. All other team members will be advised accordingly. For example (but necessarily limited to):

- Allowable class of air travel may differ between APLAC and PAC procedures, and the accreditation body needs to be aware of this difference. An arrangement for all evaluators on the team may be agreed between all parties.
- Documentation provided by the accreditation body prior to the visit. The specific requirements of each co-operation, including timelines for providing the documentation must be met by the accreditation body.

C3.2 In the formulation and classification of evaluation findings, the evaluators representing each of the Regional Groups (under the leadership of the Team Leader and, if appointed, Deputy Team Leader respectively) shall formulate and classify specific technical findings independently. For criteria common to both Regional Groups, and where technical findings indicate a systematic issue, the full team shall formulate and classify findings under the joint leadership of the Team Leader and, if appointed, Deputy Team Leader.

C3.3 The evaluation report format and content shall be prepared using the IAF/ILAC single AB report template. However the content may be expanded to accommodate the specific requirements of the Regional Groups and it is the responsibility of the Team Leader or, if appointed, Deputy Team Leader for the relevant Regional Group to facilitate this.

- C3.4 The evaluation team's review of the accreditation body's response to any findings is co-ordinated by the Team Leader, with the team members from each of the Regional Group (under the leadership of the Team Leader and, if appointed, Deputy Team Leader respectively) responsible for the review of the specific technical findings they raised.
- C3.5 The Team Leader, with the assistance of the Deputy Team Leader, if appointed, shall formulate the team's recommendation to each of the APLAC MRA Council and PAC MLA Committee. It is possible that the recommendations may not be the same (see C4 and C5 for details).
- C3.6 The Team Leader and, if appointed, the Deputy Team Leader shall be responsible for monitoring the performance of the team members representing their respective Regional Group in accordance with that Regional Group's procedures.

C4 Evaluation Report

To facilitate review of the evaluation findings by the respective Regional Groups, the specific MLA/MRA programme(s) to which each evaluation finding relates shall be identified in the evaluation report. For those findings common to all programmes (e.g. common management system, etc), they shall be identified as such. When all the findings relating to a Regional Group have been resolved, the evaluation report shall be submitted to the respective Regional Group Secretariat for follow-up actions. It is not necessary to have findings relating to both Regional Groups resolved before submitting the evaluation report to the respective Regional Groups for decision making.

C5 MRA/MLA Decision-making

When all the findings relating to a Regional Group have been confirmed by the Team Leader and, if appointed, Deputy Team Leader to have been resolved, the Team Leader / the Deputy Team Leader of the contributing Regional Group , shall provide a copy of the team's recommendation, the finalised evaluation report and any other documentation required by each Co-operation, to the respective Secretariats of the APLAC MRA Council and PAC MLA MC. Findings relating to the other Regional Group, irrespective of whether they have been resolved or not, shall be marked as such.

Each of the MRA Council and MLA Group will follow their own decision-making processes and make independent decisions regarding the granting, continuation, suspension or cancellation of signatory status of the accreditation body under the respective MRA/MLA.

D: Concurrent Evaluations

- D1 These evaluations involve two independent evaluation teams conducting the on-site evaluation at the same time according to their respective Co-operation's procedures. Each Regional Group appoints its own Team Leader and evaluation team members to cover the scopes of the evaluation.

- D2 In formulating the evaluation plans, the two Team Leaders shall co-ordinate with each other and the accreditation body prior to the evaluation to ensure that many of the common elements of the evaluation criteria of each Regional Group can be conducted jointly. Such joint activities may be but not limited to:
- (a) a joint opening meeting between the two teams and the accreditation body;
 - (b) the common evaluation criteria, for example in clauses 4, 5 and 8 of ISO/IEC 17011, could be evaluated jointly generally with a team member from each team. Where the evaluation of common criteria is undertaken by (a) team member(s) from only one of the teams, provision must be made to share the findings between the teams for inclusion in the evaluation report;
 - (c) a joint closing meeting between the two teams and the accreditation body where evaluation plans allow and given that each evaluation is of the same duration. In cases where the durations differ, a closing meeting may be held separately.
- D3 Team meetings (closed sessions) would normally be conducted independently, but where possible, the two teams should compare findings to ensure the approach to common issues is consistent.
- D4 Each Team Leader shall prepare their own evaluation reports in accordance with their Regional Group's procedures. The accreditation body shall respond separately to any findings in each report and these will be reviewed by each Regional Group's team independently. Each Team Leader will be responsible for formulating their team's recommendation to their respective decision-making committee in accordance with their Regional Group's procedures.
- D5 Each Team Leader is responsible for evaluating the performance of their team members.