

*International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF)*



## **IAF MLA Document**

# **Guidance for the Exchange of Documentation among MLA Signatories for the Purposes of Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies**

**Issue 2**

**(IAF ML 1:2011)**

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) operates programs for the accreditation of bodies that provide conformity assessment services. Such accreditation facilitates trade and reduces demands for multiple certifications.

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. Accreditation Bodies (ABs) which are members of IAF and their accredited CABs are required to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF mandatory documents for the consistent application of those standards.

AB members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) conduct regular evaluations of each other to assure the equivalence of their accreditation programs. The IAF MLAs operate at two levels:

- A MLA for the accreditation of CABs to standards including ISO/IEC 17021 for management systems CABs, ISO/IEC 17024 for personnel CABs and ISO/IEC Guide 65 for product CABs, is considered a framework MLA. A framework MLA provides confidence that accredited CABs are equally reliable in the performance of conformity assessment activities.
- A MLA for the accreditation of CABs that also includes the specific conformity assessment standard or scheme as a scope of accreditation provides confidence in the equivalence of certification.

The IAF MLA delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of certification. An organization, product or person with certification to a specific standard or scheme that is accredited by an IAF MLA signatory AB can be recognized worldwide thereby facilitating international trade.

---

---

## Table of Contents

<b>1.Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Scope	4
1.2. Purpose	4
1.3. References	4
1.4. Terms	5
<b>2.Routes and Method of Exchange</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.Review of Exchanged Documentation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.Outcome of Review</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.Accreditation Decision</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ANNEX 1 (Non-mandatory)</b>	<b>8</b>

Prepared by: IAF MLA Committee

Approved by IAF Members

Date: 28 March 2011

Issue Date: 27 April 2011

Application Date: 27 April 2011

Name for Enquiries: John Owen, IAF Corporate Secretary

Contact Phone: +61 2 9481 7343

Email <secretary1@iaf.nu>

---

## Guidance for Exchange of Documentation among MLA Signatories for the Purposes of Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Scope

1.1.1. This document provides guidance for the exchange of documentation among IAF MLA signatories, where such documentation issued by the originating accreditation body is requested for consideration as part of assessment activities relating to the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of accreditation by the receiving accreditation body. The publication of this document by IAF does not make it mandatory for IAF member accreditation bodies to exchange documents. It sets out guidelines for such an exchange when it is appropriate to do so, for example see IAF GD3 Guidance on Cross Frontier Accreditation.

**Note:** This document may also be used by accreditation bodies that are not IAF MLA signatories when receiving documentation from IAF MLA signatories.

#### 1.2 Purpose

1.2.1. The purpose of this guidance is:

(i) to provide recommended practices by which documentation may be requested and shared among IAF MLA signatories in support of:

- a) Cross frontier accreditation; and/or
- b) any other need for documentation an accreditation body may have, e.g. transfer of accreditation

(ii) to optimize cooperation among IAF MLA signatories, enabling the receiving AB to gather appropriate and relevant information for their specific purpose. As a consequence of increasing the available information on a CAB, this should assist in reducing time spent by the receiving accreditation body thus reducing the overall cost of accreditation and certification.

#### 1.3 References

1.3.1 ISO/IEC 17011:2004 Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

---

1.3.2 IAF/ILAC A5:2009 IAF/ILAC Multi-Lateral Mutual Recognition Arrangements (Arrangements) Application of ISO/IEC 17011:2004

1.3.3 IAF GD3:2003 Guidance on Cross Frontier Accreditation

1.3.4 IAF PR4:2010 Structure of IAF MLA and Endorsed Normative Documents

1.4 Terms

Abbreviations and definitions given in references of 1.3 above and the following apply.

1.4.1. **Documentation:** any relevant and pertinent documented information such as assessment reports, and that relating to complaints, appeals, and the current conformity status of a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).

**Note:** Whenever the term “CAB” is used in the text, it applies to both the “applicant and accredited conformity assessment body” unless otherwise specified.

1.4.2. **Originating accreditation body (AB):** IAF MLA signatory that issued documentation.

1.4.3. **Receiving accreditation body (AB):** IAF MLA signatory that receives documentation.

1.4.4. **Transfer of Accreditation:** the termination of accreditation with the originating AB and the application to the receiving AB.

## 2. Routes and Method of Exchange

2.1. The exchange of documentation among IAF MLA signatories typically occurs via two routes as described in 2.2 and 2.3 below:

2.2. An accredited CAB may submit documentation provided by the originating AB to the receiving AB.

2.2.1. In the case of 2.2 above, the receiving AB should request the CAB to provide a written consent (see example in ANNEX 1) to permit exchange of information, including additional documentation by the originating AB for acceptability review. The receiving AB is responsible to check the authenticity and should communicate with the originating AB in accordance with 2.3 and 2.3.1 below.

---

2.3. The receiving AB can request documentation from the originating AB concerning a CAB.

2.3.1. In the case of 2.3 above, the originating AB should obtain written consent from the CAB prior to releasing the requested documentation to the receiving AB (see example in ANNEX 1).

### **3. Review of Exchanged Documentation**

3.1. The originating AB is responsible for the correctness and accuracy of the documentation exchanged.

3.1.1 Unless otherwise requested by the receiving AB, the latest documentation should be provided. Arrangement for translation of the documentation, if necessary, should be agreed upon between the originating and receiving accreditation bodies. The arrangement should involve the CAB if it is to bear the cost of translation.

3.2. The receiving AB should review and analyse the documentation exchanged to determine acceptability as an alternate to all or part of their standard assessment process.

3.2.1 If the documentation exchanged is not deemed sufficient, the receiving AB should communicate with the CAB and the originating AB to request additional information.

3.3 If the CAB does not allow the originating AB to provide confidential documentation to the receiving AB, then the receiving AB may not possess all the information needed to make a valid decision based on the documentation. In this circumstance, the receiving AB should not rely on documentation provided by the CAB and should consider undertaking an initial assessment.

### **4. Outcome of Review**

4.1. Should the final analysis result in the conclusion that the documentation is insufficient to suit the needs of the receiving AB, it should inform the CAB and the originating AB.

4.2. If the documentation in part or entirety is found acceptable for purposes of assessment, the receiving AB should inform the CAB what assessment process, will be used.

## **5. Accreditation Decision**

5.1. The use of exchanged documentation from the originating AB for the purposes of initial accreditation, re-accreditation or surveillance assessments (including witnessing) by the receiving AB should not be used as a means to delegate its decision making authority and/or to exonerate from responsibility. (ISO/IEC 17011 clauses 4.2.2, 7.4.1 and 7.4.2a refer)

5.2. Each IAF MLA signatory should make its own independent accreditation decision based on available information and should not feel obliged to agree with conclusions found in exchanged documentation.

---

---

**ANNEX 1**  
**(Non-mandatory)**

**Example of Consent to Exchange of Documentation among IAF MLA  
signatories**

*(Name of CAB)* hereby agrees to the exchange of mutually relevant accreditation information, including documentation from *(name of originating AB)* to *(name of receiving AB)* for use in assessment activities relating to the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of accreditation, as appropriate, under the International Accreditation Forum Multilateral Recognition Arrangement.

Documentation will be held confidential in accordance with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17011:2004 Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies, clause 4.4.

This release is effective for the entire term of *(CAB's)* accreditation.

Authorized Signature:

Name:

Title:

CAB:

Date:

**Further Information**

For further Information on this document or other IAF documents, contact any member of IAF or the IAF Secretariat.

For contact details of members of IAF see - IAF Web Site - <<http://www.iaf.nu>>

Secretariat -

John Owen,

IAF Corporate Secretary,

Telephone +612 9481 7343

email <[secretary1@iaf.nu](mailto:secretary1@iaf.nu)>