

*International Accreditation Forum, Inc.*  
*(IAF)*



**IAF MLA Document**

**Procedure for Exchange of  
Documentation among MLA  
Accreditation Bodies for the  
Purposes of Assessment**

**Issue 1**

**(IAF ML 1:2003)**

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited bodies are competent to carry out the work they undertake. Accreditation bodies which are members of the International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) are required to operate at the highest standard and to require the bodies they accredit to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF Guidance to the application of those standards.

Accreditations granted by accreditation body members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), based on regular surveillance to assure the equivalence of their accreditation programmes, allows companies with an accredited conformity assessment certificate in one part of the world to have that certificate recognised everywhere else in the world.

Therefore certificates in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programmes of conformity assessment issued by bodies accredited by members of the IAF MLA are relied upon in international trade.

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Name for Enquiries: John Owen, IAF Corporate Secretary

Contact: Phone: +612 9481 7343; FAX: +612 9481 7343

Email: [secretary@accreditationforum.com](mailto:secretary@accreditationforum.com)

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Scope**

1.1.1. This document describes procedures for the exchange of documentation among IAF MLA Group member accreditation bodies (originating and receiving), 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 a procedure for such an exchange when it is appropriate to do so, for example see IAF Guidance on Cross Frontier Accreditation.

1.1.2. This procedure is applicable to the existing IAF MLA for QMS. However, it may also be applied to other areas such as EMS and Product when the IAF MLA is extended to cover those areas.

1.1.3. Since the exchange activity within this scope is based on confidence in equivalence of the IAF MLA member accreditation bodies' output, which has been established through the IAF MLA peer evaluation process, this procedure is not intended for IAF MoU member accreditation bodies other than IAF MLA Group members.

**Note:** In accordance with clause 2.1.3 of ISO/IEC Guide 61 specifying requirements for subcontracting, it is possible that accreditation bodies within or outside the IAF MLA Group may exchange their documentation. However, IAF MLA member status can be considered as evidence of meeting at least some of the requirements for the subcontracted body (e.g. its conformity with the applicable provisions of ISO/IEC Guide 61). In any case, the receiving accreditation body is responsible to satisfy itself that its procedures and operations conform to the provisions of ISO/IEC Guide 61.

### **1.2. Purpose**

1.2.1. The purposes of this procedure are:

- (i) to provide the principles and practices by which documentation may be requested and shared among IAF MLA member accreditation bodies in support of the IAF Cross Frontier Policy;
- (ii) to optimize accreditation activity among IAF MLA members, which should assist in reducing time spent by the receiving accreditation body thus reducing the overall cost of

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accreditation and certification.

### 1.3. References

1.3.1. ISO/IEC Guide 61:1996, *General Requirements for Assessment and Accreditation of Certification/Registration Bodies*

1.3.2. FG61\_2v2: IAF Guidance on the application of ISO/IEC Guide 61:1996, *General Requirements for Assessment and Accreditation of Certification/Registration Bodies*, Issue 2, Version 2 (IAF-PL-01-013)

1.3.3. FP&P\_3v4: IAF Policies and Procedures for a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement on the Level of Accreditation Bodies and on the Level of Regional Groups, Issue 3, Version 4 (IAF-PL 03-001)

1.3.4. FC\_1: IAF Procedure for the Investigation and Resolution of Complaints, Issue 1 (IAF-PL-099-024)

### 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 certification/registration body.

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

1.4.2. **Originating accreditation body:** IAF MLA Group member accreditation body that issued documentation.

1.4.3. **Receiving accreditation body:** IAF MLA Group member accreditation body that receives documentation.

### 1.5. Confidentiality

1.5.1. All information that is not publicly available and is received through the exchange of documentation irrespective of routes (see 2.1) shall be treated confidentially in accordance with clause 2.1.9 of ISO/IEC Guide 61.

## **2. Routes and Method of Exchange**

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

2.2. An accredited certification/registration body may submit documentation provided by the originating accreditation body to the receiving accreditation body.

2.2.1. In the case of 2.2 above, the receiving accreditation body shall request the certification/registration body to provide a written consent (ANNEX 1) to permit release of documentation and data, for acceptability review, provided by the originating accreditation body. The receiving accreditation body is responsible to check the authenticity and should communicate with the originating accreditation body in accordance with 2.3 and 2.3.1 below.

2.3. The receiving accreditation body can request documentation from the originating accreditation body concerning a certification/registration body.

2.3.1. In the case of 2.3 above, the originating accreditation body shall obtain written consent (ANNEX 1) from the certification/registration body prior to releasing the requested documentation to the receiving accreditation body.

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

3.1. The originating accreditation body is responsible for the correctness and accuracy of the documentation exchanged. Unless otherwise requested by the receiving accreditation body, and agreed by the certification/registration body, the latest documentation shall 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 certification/registration body if it is to bear the cost of translation.

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

3.3. If the documentation exchanged is not deemed sufficient, the receiving accreditation body shall communicate with the certification/registration body and the originating accreditation body to request additional information.

## **4. Outcome of Review**

4.1. Should the final analysis result in the conclusion that the documentation is

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insufficient to suit the needs of the receiving accreditation body, it shall provide such rationale to the certification/registration body and the originating accreditation body. For complaints and disputes relating to this conclusion, see 6.2 of this procedure.

4.2. If the documentation in part or entirety is found acceptable for purposes of assessment, the receiving accreditation body shall inform the certification/registration body what assessment process, normal or reduced in assessment time, will be used.

## **5. Accreditation Decision**

5.1. It is a requirement of clause 2.3.2 of ISO/IEC Guide 61 that decision on accreditation shall not be delegated to an outside body. The use of exchanged documentation from the originating accreditation body for the purposes of initial accreditation, reassessment or surveillance audits by the receiving accreditation body shall not be used as a means to delegate its decision making authority and/or to exonerate from responsibility.

5.2. Each IAF MLA member accreditation body shall not compromise the independence of their decision making as a result of the use of exchanged documentation nor shall they feel obliged to agree with conclusions found in exchanged documentation.

## **6. Appeals, Complaints and Disputes**

6.1. Appeals, complaints and disputes by the certification/registration body shall be subject to the procedures of the receiving accreditation body in accordance with clause 2.6.1 of ISO/IEC Guide 61.

6.2. In the event that the certification/registration body is not satisfied with the receiving accreditation body's complaints and/or disputes process, the certification/registration body may use the IAF complaints and disputes process as detailed in FC\_1: IAF Procedure for the Investigation and Resolution of Complaints, Issue 1 (IAF-PL-099-024). Either the receiving or the originating accreditation body may also invoke the IAF complaints process.

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**ANNEX 1 Consent to Exchange of Documentation among IAF MLA  
Accreditation Bodies**

*(Name of Certification/Registration body)* hereby agrees to the exchange of mutually relevant accreditation documentation from *(name of originating accreditation body)* to *(name of receiving accreditation body)* 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 Guide 61: *General Requirements for Assessment and Accreditation of Certification/registration Bodies*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1996, clause 2.1.9.

This release is effective for the entire term of *(Name of Certification/Registration body's)* accreditation.

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_

Certification/Registration Body: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

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**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,

Corporate Secretary IAF,

53 Manuka Circle,

Cherrybrook NSW 2126, Australia

Telephone +612 9481 7343

Facsimile +612 9481 7343

email <[secretary@accreditationforum.com](mailto:secretary@accreditationforum.com)>