

International Accreditation Forum, Inc.
(IAF)



IAF MLA Document

**Procedure for responding to
Inquiries on IAF MLA Signatory
Equivalence**

Issue 1

(IAF ML 3:2004)

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) operates a programme of conformity assessment which promotes the elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, removing technical barriers caused by demands for specific certification and/or registration requirements. The IAF programme of conformity assessment delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of certificates in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programmes of conformity assessment.

The IAF programme allows companies with an accredited conformity assessment certificate in one part of the world to have that certificate recognised everywhere else in the world. IAF promotes the international acceptance of accreditations granted by its signatory accreditation body members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), based on the equivalence of their accreditation programmes.

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Name for Enquiries: John Owen, Corporate Secretary IAF

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

Email: secretary@iaf.nu

IAF Procedure on Responding to Inquiries on Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) Signatory Equivalence

1. General

1.1 This procedure is to be used by IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) signatories and other IAF members, as appropriate, to respond to inquiries regarding the equivalence of accreditations of IAF MLA signatories.

2. References

2.1 IAF Memorandum of Understanding. (FMoU_3, issue 3, IAF-PL-01-007)*

2.2 IAF Policies and Procedures for a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement on the Level of Accreditation Bodies and on the Level of Regional Groups. (FP&P_3v4, issue 3, version4, IAF-PL-03-001)*

2.3 IAF MLA Procedure for Identification of Equivalence of Accreditations. (IAF-BD-00-038)*

* Available on the IAF Website at www.iaf.nu under Publications

3. Procedure

3.1 IAF MLA signatories shall take appropriate actions to effectively recommend and promote the acceptance of the certificates of conformity in areas covered by the IAF MLA from certification/registration bodies that have been accredited by other IAF MLA signatories as being competent to conduct such conformity assessment activities. IAF MLA signatories shall follow this IAF procedure when responding to inquiries on IAF MLA signatory equivalence.

3.2 The approach and content of IAF MLA signatories' responses may vary depending on the nature of the inquiry and the level of knowledge of the inquirer. In many cases, IAF MLA signatories receive inquiries by phone and the inquirer is often satisfied with a response by phone. In other cases, an inquirer may request a written response with an explanation of IAF MLA signatory equivalence. IAF MLA signatories shall ensure that all inquirers are provided with necessary information on IAF MLA signatory equivalence.

3.3. As appropriate, the response may need to contain one or more of the following elements:

3.3.1. Brief description of IAF and the purpose of the IAF MLA

Example: The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) is an international association of accreditation bodies and other interested stakeholders that aims to facilitate international trade by working to remove barriers that may result from marketplace demands for specific certifications and/or registrations of management systems. To accomplish this objective, the IAF has established a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) among its accreditation body members. The purpose of the IAF MLA is to ensure that accreditations and the certificates issued by certification/registration bodies accredited by IAF MLA signatories of the MLA are the result of competently conducted assessments. Each IAF MLA signatory recognizes the outcomes of the other accreditation bodies as equivalent to its own, and recommends and promotes the acceptance of the certificates of conformity within the recognized scopes from the certification /registration bodies accredited by the IAF MLA signatories as being on an equal basis with those of its own accredited bodies.

3.3.2. Brief description of the peer evaluation process that is used to provide confidence in the competence of accreditation activities of other IAF MLA signatories.

Example: Accreditation body members of IAF are admitted to the IAF MLA only after a rigorous and stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team. The peer evaluation team is charged with ensuring that the applicant member complies fully with both the international standards and IAF guidance. These peer evaluations and the formal monitoring and re-evaluations of each member are designed to ensure that all the members of the IAF MLA operate their accreditation systems in a competent and equivalent manner.

3.3.3. A statement regarding the accreditation activities or “scope” covered by the IAF MLA.

Example: We as well as accreditation body “XXX” both participate in the IAF MLA for the accreditation of quality management system certification registration/bodies (or other IAF MLA as appropriate). As IAF MLA signatories, both accreditation bodies and the certification/registration bodies they accredit are required to operate in a competent manner and in accordance with appropriate international standards. Certification/registration bodies accredited by both organizations must be competent to conduct assessments of organizations to the appropriate management system standard in accordance

with applicable international standards. As a consequence of the above we recognize the accreditation results of accreditation body "XXX" as being equivalent to our own results.

3.3.4. A statement as to whether the activity identified in the inquiry is included within the scope of the IAF MLA.

Example: Certification/registration bodies are accredited by both organizations for their competence in conducting assessments of organizations for conformance to the requirements of ISO 9001:2000 (or other standard as appropriate).

3.3.5. A reference to the IAF website for additional information on the IAF MLA.

Example: Additional information on IAF, the IAF MLA, as well as a list of IAF MLA Signatories is available at: <http://www.iaf.nu>

3.4 In cases where written responses are requested by the inquirers, IAF MLA signatories shall maintain a record of the responses for periodic review by peer evaluation teams

End of IAF Procedure on Responding to Inquiries on MLA Signatory Equivalence

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

Facsimile +612 9481 7343

email <secretary@iaf.nu>