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ISO/IEC 17043:2010 Accreditation: an Accreditation Body's Perspective

Robert Knake

Program Manager, PTP

American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA)

Frederick, Maryland, U.S.A.



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Overview

- Who is A2LA
- Proficiency Testing Provider (PTP) Assessment Approach
- Assessment Challenges Encountered and Approaches used to Overcome them
- Accreditation of PTPs as a Tool to Increase Stakeholder Confidence



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A2LA is:

- Non profit
- Non governmental
- Independent 3rd party
- Established in 1978
- International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) Signatory



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A2LA provides accreditation:

- ISO/IEC 17025:2005 – Testing and Calibration Laboratories
- ISO 15189:2012 – Medical Laboratories
- ISO Guide 34:2009 – Reference Material Producers
- ISO/IEC 17043:2010 – Proficiency Testing Providers
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012 – Product Certification Bodies
- ISO/IEC 17020:2012 – Inspection Bodies



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ILAC MRA Arrangement

- ILAC – International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
- International structure used to recognize accreditation bodies
- System to evaluate accreditation bodies against ISO/IEC 17011
- This is to facilitate and ensure harmonization amongst the accreditation bodies globally and the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies internationally.
- Free trade goal of “a product tested or inspected once and accepted everywhere”



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PTP Assessment Approach

- Assessment teams include a technical assessor or assessors familiar with the testing and technical aspects associated with the PT schemes as well as a statistical expert.
- Most assessments require both the technical assessor(s) and statistical expert to be onsite but there are cases when one or more of the assessment team can perform their assessment remotely. It depends on the nature of the PT schemes and what activities the PTP subcontracts.



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PTP Assessment Approach

- It is critical to identify what activities the PTP subcontracts vs. what they perform themselves. The assessors will need this information to plan the assessment approach.
- It is also critical to determine the PTP's method(s) for assigning values, evaluating participants, etc. as this can effect the assessment team logistics. For example, qualitative schemes may not require a statistical assessor to be onsite.



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Robustness of 17043 and 13528

- 17043 and 13528 have proven to work very well in the PTP accreditation program. They have been applied across a wide breadth of PT schemes and across borders and have shown to be effective to evaluate competence of PTP programs.
- Areas of PT schemes include: Environmental and Food Chemistry and Microbiology, Calibration in a Broad Spectrum of Measurement, EMC, Agents of Biological Attack, Veterinary, Forensic Science, Air Chemistry, Work Place Hygiene, Medical, etc.



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Assessment Challenges

- A PTP can be organizationally structured in many different ways and can subcontract many activities associated with the 17043 accreditation process.
- This can cause problems with planning the assessment and organizing the assessment team as well as evaluating the subcontractors used by the PTP.
- PTPs often offer a broad scope of PT schemes covering a wide range of testing technologies.



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How We've Overcome These Challenges

- Assessment preparation time was increased and the information that is requested with new and renewal applications was expanded.
- We have used assessment techniques that include webinar, video conferencing, teleconference, remote computer access, etc. to facilitate review of information that can be reviewed remotely.
- Assessment teams coordination of responsibilities has become much more defined to increase efficiency.



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PTP Accreditation and Increased Stakeholders' Confidence

- A2LA promotes the use of accredited providers for our testing and calibration laboratories
- Governmental and Non-Governmental bodies has recognized our PTP accreditation as a means of evaluating acceptable PTPs for laboratories in their systems
- ISO/IEC 17043 accreditation has recently been added to the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation Mutual Recognition Arrangement



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In Summary

- PTP assessments must include technical expertise as well as statistical expertise
- Accreditation of PTPs offers some unique challenges that must be overcome to effectively assess their organization
- PTP accreditation offers increased stakeholder confidence which includes their customers as well as regulators who use their PT reports as a means of accepting laboratory results.



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Thank You. Any Questions?



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