



Heads Up

Issue: 8

Date: March 10, 2011

To: ACLASS Customers, Assessors, and Interested Parties

From: Mike Weisrock

Re: Internal Proficiency Testing Programs – New Forms Required

The aim of mutual recognition is just that: mutual recognition. In the ISO/IEC 17025 world, it's about having confidence that other laboratories you may deal with have capabilities you can trust. You feel comfortable using these laboratories because they've gone through the same rigorous accreditation processes you've gone through. You're assured their management system and processes have been evaluated. You're confident their test and calibration processes have been witnessed by assessors with the expertise in the appropriate fields of test and calibration. The international community, however, wants added assurance.

The international community places a great deal of emphasis on proficiency testing (PT) as a means of monitoring a laboratory's ability to perform accurate test and calibration measurements. It is a means of tying everything together. It is a measure of all the elements of section five of ISO/IEC 17025. It is an indicator that training, environmental controls, methods, uncertainty, equipment, traceability, handling, and reporting are all working together.

Some laboratories may choose an alternative to established commercial PT programs. They may organize their own internal proficiency testing as a cost-saving measure or because commercial tests are either not available or not relevant. This may be an acceptable practice in many cases. There are other cases, however, in which the PT does not prove an effective indicator of the quality of a test or calibration. When analyzed, these tests may yield scores very near zero. You don't get the information you need as a manager, and we don't get information that helps boost any confidence in the international community.

In an effort to get more meaningful PT results, ACLASS will require submission of a written procedure for all internal PT program plans for accredited laboratories. Your procedure must include all applicable requirements of ISO/IEC 17043. You can find these requirements outlined ACLASS Guidance on Proficiency Testing/Inter-Laboratory Comparison PT/ILC Requirements (<http://www.aiclasscorp.com/media/2003/aiclassguidance-pt-11may2010.pdf>). You will also need to fill out ACLASS Form 40, Internal PT Compliance Checklist (<http://www.aiclasscorp.com/media/14383/40-internal-pt-compliance-checklist.doc>), which is a checklist with all necessary requirements. This form is available either on the website or through your accreditation manager. You'll receive written notification from an accreditation manager of the plan acceptance.

Please submit your internal PT plans to these accreditation managers:

Geneva Bowman, ext. 205, gbowman@anab-aiclass.org

Terry Burgess, ext. 225, tburgess@anab-aiclass.org

Mike Weisrock, ext. 227, mweisrock@anab-aiclass.org

This approval requirement will take effect at mid-year of 2011. After July 1, 2011, assessors will review records of internal PT approval by an ACLASS accreditation manager. If the internal plan has not been approved, a minor nonconformance must be written. The necessary corrective action will need to include an approved plan. Between now and July 1, an opportunity for improvement will be issued if this is not in place.

Please feel free to contact any of the accreditation managers with any questions.