



**ACCLASS Guidance on
ISO/IEC 17020 Inspection Body
Accreditation**

March 28, 2011

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1.0 PURPOSE

This guidance document is intended to assist both ACLASS assessors and ACLASS customers, both accredited and applicant inspection bodies, by listing some examples and further clarification on the ACLASS requirements for accreditation. The recommendations and guidance made here are intended to allow adherence to both ILAC guidance document IAF/ILAC-A 4 and ACLASS requirements Document # 4, while helping to standardize formats across the range of potential accredited inspection fields in the sphere of ISO/IEC 17020 accredited operations.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

ACCLASS is committed to superior accreditation services including those for inspection bodies / inspection agencies following ISO/IEC 17020. Our processes for such accreditation offer applicant bodies the opportunity to assure their customers of their compliance with international standards and international recognition of good practices

The areas encompassed in the inspection arena may entail numerous processes including engineering, electrical and other utility work, mechanical and chemical verifications etc. It may involve multiple sets of authorities and requirements, from legal and regulatory to industry and customer-specific requirements. Much of the value for inspection services, however, relate to international trade assurances, risks of product failure, and more indirect risks to environmental and human health.

Inspection body accreditation involves assurance of technical competence and practices in addition to good quality management practices. Our management and technical staff assure high-quality service, integrity, independence, impartiality, confidentiality, highly-trained experts and assessors, and unmatched customer service. This guidance document is intended to provide clarification in regards to Proficiency Testing/Inter-laboratory Comparisons for Inspection bodies, on-site assessments (scope witnessing), and Inspection body records.

ACCLASS uses ISO/IEC 17020 (or future versions thereof), *General Criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection*, ACLASS Document # 4 (or future versions thereof), *Guidance on ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation* and IAF/ILAC-A4 (or future versions thereof), *Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC 17020*, for the accreditation of inspection bodies.

ACCLASS will maintain impartiality as required by ISO/IEC TR 17010 (see also Responsibilities and Obligations of the Customer, Appendix A of the ACLASS application for inspection body accreditation).

3.0 ACCREDITATION PROCESS GUIDANCE

3.1 Guidance for the Proficiency Testing / Inter-laboratory Comparisons

The inspection body seeking accreditation shall include a completed ACLASS form 15 (PT/ILC Four-Year Plan) and form 40 (Internal PT Compliance Checklist) with their application package. If the inspection body does not participate in PT/ILC activities it shall provide justification for exclusion (also to be documented on form 40) and/or provide results from proficiency testing conducted based on the field of inspection listed on the accreditation schedule and the subsequent methods & procedures as applicable. This includes a written procedure for internal PT program plans for accredited inspection bodies and applies to inspection bodies regardless of the ownership of the facilities and/or equipment being used. The inspection body should be able to demonstrate the measures taken to verify the integrity of 2nd and 3rd party information pertaining to PT/ILC activities supplied by the inspection body's customer. IB's may organize their own internal proficiency testing or utilize data provided from government-mandated inspections as a cost-saving measure if commercial tests are not available and/or not relevant.

Example: Proficiency testing results generated/collected/obtained by the inspection body based on National Board Inspections for Boiler & Pressure Vessels mandated by certain states as a result of the inspection body being legally authorized by the state to conduct this type of inspection. The inspection method/procedure listed in the report must match the method/procedure listed on the (proposed) accreditation schedule.

The recommended minimum amount of appropriate PT activities for an inspection body are:

- One activity prior to gaining accreditation
- One activity relating to each area of inspection of an inspection body's scope of accreditation within four years (with the exception of areas where the inspection body provides justification for exclusion and as a direct result is given approval by the accreditation body).

3.2 Guidance for the on-site assessment

Assessment activities are grouped in two practical elements, namely:

- Assessment of the management system
- Assessment of technical competence.

With regard to the technical aspects, the assessment (initial & scope extension visit) and the surveillance visits should cover all the inspection areas mentioned in the scope over a full assessment cycle. For a given inspection activity, the Accreditation Body should ensure that it assesses the key methods and/or procedures in the scope and the associated personnel; that it selects inspections that can be witnessed during the assessment and surveillance visits and that the selected methods are suitable to provide confidence in the competence of the inspection

body to perform all the inspections proposed for the scope of accreditation at an appropriate quality level.

Potential criteria for the selection of these methods, from both quantitative and qualitative points of view:

- Geographic areas of inspection services offered
- Number of inspection personnel associated with the proposed accreditation areas
- Technical complexity
- Balance between standard methods and nonstandard methods
- Balance between complete observations of performance and survey of reports and/or validation records and/or quality control records and/or inspection body's customer facilities.

During the initial assessment or reassessment the number of methods to be assessed must be sufficiently large so that the key or principal methods in each field of activity listed on the scope can be drawn upon and adequately assessed. In each field of activity, at least one key or principal method must be assessed and at least 25 % of the inspection personnel associated with the proposed accreditation areas must be witnessed. This guideline applies to inspection bodies regardless of the number of geographic areas of inspection services offered and the number of inspection personnel associated with the proposed accreditation areas.

Example: A Type-A inspection body has 20 full-time inspectors listed on their accreditation application. Furthermore, the inspection body has 4 geographic areas of inspection services offered listed with 5 inspectors at each location. Therefore, based on these guidelines at least 5 inspectors must be witnessed during the initial assessment.

NOTE: If, for any reason, an on-site witness assessment of a live inspection is not practicable, this should be brought to the notice of ACLASS in advance, so as to discuss a new strategy. Weather and other logistics may force cancellation of some direct witnessing and will be managed on a case to case basis. For new area of Inspection category, if arrangements to make an on site inspection is practically ruled out, such cases may be brought to the notice of ACLASS in advance to perform a simulation of the inspection activities

3.3 Guidance for document and record needs for the assessment

The following documents shall be provided to the accreditation body when submitting an application for inspection body accreditation:

- Quality Manual
- Standard operating procedures and work instructions pertaining to the proposed accreditation scope
- Organizational structure
- List of proficiency activities (see also section 3.1 of this document)
- Completed draft scope of accreditation for inspection bodies
- A list of all equipment used for inspection services that you wish to have accredited.
- A matrix showing names of Inspection Staff, date of employment, initial date of

acquiring a particular technical competency, and renewal/ongoing revalidation, if any

In addition, the following records will be obtained by the accreditation body throughout the accreditation assessment activity:

- Records of observed inspections from each inspector and geographic area witnessed at the time of the assessment
- Records of internal audits conducted from all operational sites (applicable only for inspection bodies with multiple geographic area offices as listed on the application other than the head office which keep records of inspection work independently of the head office)
- Education and training records of the inspection staff for inspectors regardless of the location of the operational site
- Records of Supervision and Monitoring of Inspection Staff (on site and off site)
- Records of the equipment calibration and verification for equipment not owned by the inspection body
- Information supplied to the inspection body by the inspection body's customer if such information is used by the inspection body to determine conformity to an inspection method and or procedure
- Records of safety requirements identified and obeyed by the inspection body as identified and required by the inspection body's customer
- Records of contract review of the inspection body's customer (Note: For routine or repeat work requests, review may be limited to considerations of time and human resources and acceptable record in such cases would be a signed acceptance of the contract by an appropriately authorized person.).

3.4 Guidance on the accreditation requirements of ISO/IEC 17020

The ACLASS Document # 4, *Guidance on ISO/IEC 17020 Accreditation* (or future versions thereof) provides all the accreditation requirements for organizations seeking inspection body accreditation. Document #4 is mandatory for all ACLASS applicant and accredited customers.

This guidance document is not a source of accreditation requirements however.

Revision History

Date	Description
March 3, 2011	Initial Draft – M.. Reiter
March 31, 2011	Review and update – B. Hirt