



**ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement):
Supplementary Requirements and Guidelines for the
Use of Accreditation Symbols and for Claims of
Accreditation Status by Accredited Laboratories**

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The ILAC Secretariat
PO Box 7507
Silverwater NSW 2128
Australia
Fax: +61 2 9736 8373
Email: ilac@nata.asn.au

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1. PREAMBLE

Accreditation provides formal recognition that a testing or calibration laboratory is capable of meeting certain standards. These are standards of quality, performance, technical expertise and competence.

Once accredited, a laboratory may wish to make reference to its accreditation status in its test or calibration reports or certificates. Accreditation normally entitles the accredited laboratory to endorse the relevant documents in the name of the accreditation body, by using accreditation symbol and/or by using appropriate words, in accordance with prescribed procedures and rules.

Such endorsed documents can enjoy wide acceptance nationally and also internationally through the ILAC mutual recognition arrangement (MRA). Use of the ILAC Laboratory Combined MRA Mark on endorsed calibration and test reports reinforces such acceptance. The rules for use of this mark are provided in the ILAC Laboratory Combined MRA Mark Sub License Agreement.

An accredited laboratory may also wish to use accreditation symbols or the ILAC Laboratory Combined MRA Mark to claim its accreditation status for promotional purposes, on pre-printed letterhead or on quotations for testing or calibration work covered under the scope of accreditation, advertisements, websites and other documents.

ISO/IEC 17011 clause 8.3 requires an accreditation body to have a policy governing the use and protection of its accreditation symbols and reference to accreditation by its accredited organisations. This document provides supplementary requirements as well as guidelines for the use of accreditation symbols and for claims of accreditation status in the context of the ILAC MRA.

The various aspects which an accreditation body would normally include when developing its policy for the use of its accreditation symbols by its accredited laboratories are detailed under the following headings:

5. General Requirements
6. Reproduction of Accreditation Symbols
7. Authorised or Approved Signatories
8. Reporting Results Not Covered by the Scope of Accreditation
9. Subcontracted Tests or Calibrations
10. Opinions and Interpretations
11. Calibration Certificates and Labels
12. Advertising and Publicity
13. Mutual Recognition Claims
14. Misuse of an Accreditation Symbol or Accreditation Status

2. PURPOSE

The requirements and guidelines in this document have been developed to ensure a more uniform approach to the use of accreditation symbols and for the manner in which a laboratory may refer to its accreditation status and make claims to ILAC MRA. Since this document contains both requirements and guidelines, to avoid confusion, only those statements that include “shall” set requirements.

3. AUTHORSHIP

This publication was prepared by the ILAC Arrangement Committee and endorsed for publication following a successful 60 day ballot of the ILAC voting membership in 2006.

4. TERMINOLOGY

- 4.1 For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 17000 and ISO/IEC 17011 apply.

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 An accreditation body may have more than one accreditation symbol for its accreditation programs, for example, for testing laboratories, for calibration laboratories, etc. These accreditation symbols identify which types of activity have been accredited.

The use of accreditation symbols by an accredited laboratory may be voluntary. An accredited laboratory, however, should be encouraged to issue reports or certificates bearing the accreditation symbol when the tests or calibrations come under the scope of accreditation. Only reports bearing the accreditation symbol can benefit fully from the recognition that the ILAC MRA and its regional counterparts bring.

- 5.2 Where reports and certificates contain the results of tests or calibrations covered by the scope of accreditation, the accreditation body concerned shall specify the minimum requirements regarding the format and content of those reports or certificates, including those for the incorporation of the accreditation symbol or for making reference to accreditation. The accreditation body shall also publish a policy governing the use of accreditation symbols and their protection. Examples of formats may be included in publications issued by the accreditation body, which contain the policy and rules for the use of accreditation symbols.
- 5.3 The accreditation body shall identify which external organisations are permitted to use its accreditation symbols or make reference to accreditation status and shall set the conditions governing their use. For example:
- the accreditation symbol shall not be used by a laboratory’s subcontractors that are not accredited;
 - the accreditation symbol shall not be used by applicants for accreditation;

- the accreditation symbol shall be used by an accredited laboratory only under the name in which it holds accreditation;
- accreditation symbol shall not be placed on the products or items which a laboratory has tested or calibrated (except on calibration labels. See clause 11.2).

6. REPRODUCTION OF ACCREDITATION SYMBOLS

6.1 To assist an accredited laboratory in the use of accreditation symbols, examples of the types of accreditation symbol available and when and how they can be used shall be published.

6.2 Information shall include, where appropriate:

- format and proportions of the accreditation symbols;
- sizes and colours of the accreditation symbols;
- location of accreditation number in relation to the accreditation symbols;
- positioning of accreditation symbols on reports, certificates and calibration labels and of any text to be included in association with the accreditation symbols;
- availability of photographic and/or electronic copies of the accreditation symbols for use by the accredited laboratory;
- any relevant instructions on the reproduction of the accreditation symbols when they are used on electronic documents.

7. AUTHORISED OR APPROVED SIGNATORIES

An accreditation body may allow only those individuals of a laboratory who have been given such approval to sign reports or certificates bearing the accreditation symbol. Such individuals are normally called authorised or approved signatories. When an accreditation body implements an approved signatory system, it shall define requirements for authorised or approved signatories. Such requirements shall include:

- whether the use of an accreditation symbol or other claims of accreditation status is dependent on reports or certificates being signed by a signatory or signatories who have been authorised by the accreditation body to sign such reports or certificates. Authorisation of individuals may cover all or part of the activities listed in the scope of accreditation of the laboratory. The accreditation body shall maintain a list of authorised or approved signatories in such cases
- restrictions on the use of an accreditation body symbol or other claims of accreditation status on reports or certificates in the absence of approved signatories.

8. REPORTING RESULTS NOT COVERED BY THE SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION

- 8.1 Customers of an accredited laboratory may request endorsed reports or certificates which contain some results of tests or calibrations for which the laboratory is not accredited.

If an accreditation body allows an accredited laboratory to include results for tests or calibrations not covered by the scope of accreditation in its endorsed reports or certificates, in order to ensure that results cannot be interpreted as being for tests or calibrations covered by the scope of accreditation, the policy of the accreditation body shall include:

- a requirement that the accreditation symbols cannot be used, and that neither reports nor certificates nor any enclosed letters (including the stationery on which they are printed) can include any reference to accreditation, if none of the results are for tests or calibrations within the scope of accreditation;
 - a requirement that, where tests or calibrations outside the scope of accreditation are included, they are clearly identified as such by a clear disclaimer (e.g. “This laboratory is not accredited for the tests or calibrations marked *”);
- 8.2 There shall be nothing in any test or calibration report or certificate or in any attachments or other materials that implies, or may lead any user of the results or any interested party to believe that the work is covered by the scope of accreditation when it is not.

9. SUBCONTRACTED TESTS OR CALIBRATIONS

- 9.1 An accredited laboratory may subcontract testing or calibration work to another laboratory that may or may not be accredited (including branches of its own organisation). The accredited laboratory may then wish to include the results of the tests or calibrations it has subcontracted in its reports or certificates endorsed with the accreditation symbol.

If an accreditation body allows an accredited laboratory to include results of subcontracted tests or calibrations in its endorsed reports or certificates, the accreditation body shall define such circumstances. These shall include:

- the accredited laboratory takes full responsibility for the subcontracted tests or calibrations and, unless it is an accredited branch of the same laboratory, has informed the customer of the proposed subcontracting and has obtained his/her prior approval;
- approval has been obtained from the subcontractor to report excerpts from the subcontractor’s report or certificate;
- the subcontractor is itself accredited for the specific tests or calibrations concerned and the results have been included in the subcontractor laboratory’s endorsed report or certificate;

- 9.2 If the subcontractor is not accredited by the same accreditation body that has accredited the subcontracting laboratory, the above circumstances could apply if the two accreditation bodies are signatories to a MRA.
- 9.3 If an accreditation body allows a laboratory to include results from non-accredited subcontractors in endorsed reports, the requirements of Section 5 shall be met completely (i.e. the results are clearly indicated as being outside the scope of accreditation).
- 9.4 Where all tests or calibrations were subcontracted to a laboratory that was not accredited, none of the accreditation symbols of the accreditation body may be used on any reports or certificates issued by the accredited subcontracting laboratory and no stationery relating to the report or certificate may include any reference to or implication of its accreditation.

10. OPINIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

- 10.1 The customers of an accredited laboratory may need, in reports or certificates endorsed with the accreditation symbol additional comment regarding the serviceability or suitability for specific purposes of the items, samples, batches or consignments, or an amplification or interpretation of the results obtained.

The accreditation body shall follow the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025, clause 5.10.5 that allows the inclusion of expressions of opinions, interpretations or other statements on endorsed reports or certificates.

Such statements may be included in the laboratory's reports under the following provisions:

- Any statement of interpretation of results on an endorsed report or certificate shall be based on those results for which accreditation is held.
 - There may be signatories authorised to prepare and issue statements of interpretation or opinion on a report endorsed with the accreditation symbol.
- 10.2 Where such statements of opinion and interpretation are outside the scope of accreditation, the laboratory shall be required to include a disclaimer in the report or certificate, close to the accreditation symbol or to the expression of opinion, such as:

“The opinions/interpretations expressed in this report are outside the scope of this laboratory's accreditation”.

However, it may be preferable to express opinions and interpretations, which are outside the scope of accreditation, on a separate letter which is not part of the endorsed report and which does not carry the accreditation symbol.

11. CALIBRATION CERTIFICATES AND LABELS

11.1 Calibration Certificates

To fulfil the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 clause 5.10.4.1, the contents of certificates for calibrations covered by the scope of accreditation need to contain appropriate expressions of the measurement uncertainty (or uncertainties) associated with the results of the calibration and/or a statement of compliance with an identified metrological specification or clauses thereof. For calibration certificates to be used by testing laboratories or ISO 9001 certified organisations to establish traceability of their measurements, they should be endorsed with the accreditation symbol for calibration.

11.2 Calibration Labels on Equipment

An accreditation body may allow the use of calibration labels containing accreditation symbol, and which are attached to calibrated equipment. The calibration label would usually include the following information:

- the name of the accredited calibration laboratory or its accreditation number;
- equipment identification;
- date of current calibration;
- cross reference to the calibration certificate issued in respect of the calibration.

11.3 The accreditation body shall restrict the use of these labels to equipment that has been calibrated by an accredited calibration laboratory using calibration methods covered by its scope of accreditation.

12. ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

12.1 An accredited laboratory and its parent, subsidiaries or sister companies may wish to incorporate in publicity and/or advertising material, statements concerning the laboratory's accreditation.

Materials may include:

- publicity and advertising material;
- brochures and organisation publications;
- technical literature;
- business reports;
- quotations or proposals for work.

An accreditation body shall have rules to govern the claiming of accreditation status in advertising and publicity materials by an accredited laboratory and its parents, subsidiaries and sister companies. Such rules shall require the use of the accreditation symbols and claims of accreditation status are in a way that is not misleading.

- 12.2 The use of the accreditation symbols or material implying accreditation should enhance the reputation and value of accreditation for all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the accreditation body to ensure that the general use of its accreditation symbols and other claims of accreditation by a laboratory do not misrepresent the laboratory's accreditation status and do not bring the accreditation process into disrepute. ISO/IEC 17011, clause 8.3.2a) requires that an accredited laboratory "fully conforms with the requirements of the accreditation body for claiming accreditation status, when making reference to its accreditation in communication media such as the Internet, documents, brochures or advertising".
- 12.3 ISO/IEC 17011, clause 8.3.1 requires that an accreditation body shall have a policy governing its accreditation symbol's protection and use. The policy and other requirements of the accreditation body for claiming accreditation status may include:
- the accreditation claim is related to or associated with only the testing or calibration services that are covered by the scope of accreditation, and not with any other activities in which the laboratory or its related organisation may be involved. In proposals or quotations, it may be necessary to distinguish tests or calibrations that are covered by the scope of accreditation from those which are not;
 - an accreditation body symbol or accreditation claim is not affixed to an item or product (or part of it) or used to imply that an item or product has been certified;
 - an accreditation symbol or an accreditation claim is not used in any manner which gives the impression that the accreditation body accepts responsibility for test or calibration results, or for any opinion or interpretation derived from those results, or that the accreditation body approves a tested or calibrated product or item (for requirements for accreditation symbol on calibration label, see clause 11.2);
 - where an accreditation symbol is printed on letterhead and/or other corporate stationery, such stationery is not used for work proposals or quotes if none of the work is within the scope of accreditation, nor for reporting of test or calibration results if none of them are within the scope of the accreditation, nor for certifying a product or item;
 - where the quality management system of an accredited laboratory is certified to ISO 9001, the certification body symbol is not used for the reporting of results of any test or calibration covered by the scope of accreditation.
- 12.4 An accredited laboratory may mention that it operates a laboratory quality management system on its test reports and calibration certificates using the following statement.

“This laboratory is accredited in accordance with the recognised International Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005. This accreditation demonstrates technical competence for a defined scope and the operation of a laboratory quality management system (refer joint ISO-ILAC-IAF Communiqué dated 18 June 2005)”

An accredited laboratory choosing to use the above statement on its test reports and calibration certificates should also either supply, or provide access to (via a website), the Joint ISO-ILAC-IAF Communiqué as part of the package for its laboratory customers.

13. MUTUAL RECOGNITION CLAIMS

- 13.1 Where an accreditation body has a mutual recognition arrangement with one or more other accreditation bodies, its accredited laboratories may, in approved words, make claim to such recognition on their reports or certificates.
- 13.2 When the accreditation body is a signatory to the ILAC MRA, and has signed the ILAC-MRA Mark License Agreement, it may sublicense the use of the ILAC-MRA Mark to its accredited laboratories. The sub licensee laboratory shall only use the Combined MRA Mark together with its accreditation number (i.e. the “Laboratory Combined MRA Mark”). The accreditation body shall only allow those accredited laboratories that have signed the sub license agreement to use the Laboratory Combined MRA Mark and make it a requirement that they use the Mark in accordance with the provisions of the ILAC Laboratory Combined MRA Mark Sub License Agreement and all relevant provisions of this document. The accreditation body shall meet the obligations and provisions of the ILAC-MRA Mark License Agreement.
- 13.3 The use of accreditation symbols of mutual recognition partners on endorsed reports or certificates shall not be permitted by an accreditation body unless it has specific one-to-one agreements with its partner(s) whose accreditation symbols are to be used.

14. MISUSE OF ACCREDITATION SYMBOL OR ACCREDITATION STATUS

- 14.1 Misuse of an accreditation symbol, the ILAC-MRA Mark or claim of accreditation status by any organisation should be treated seriously. It could significantly undermine the credibility of the whole international conformity assessment process.

ISO/IEC 17011, clause 8.3.3 states *“the accreditation body shall take suitable action to deal with incorrect references to accreditation status or misleading use of accreditation symbols found in advertisement, catalogues, etc. Note Suitable actions include request for corrective action, withdrawal of accreditation, publication of the transgression and if necessary, other legal action.”*

An accreditation body shall have rules and procedures for sanctions, where misrepresentation of accreditation status is discovered. In some situations, and particularly where misuse was by an organisation that is not accredited, legal actions under copyright or fair trading or other laws of the relevant jurisdiction may be necessary.

- 14.2 An accreditation body shall have procedures to ensure that an accredited laboratory discontinues the use of the accreditation symbols or any reference to accreditation status in reports, certificates, promotional material, stationery, internet web sites, etc. for an activity immediately on suspension, withdrawal or termination of the accreditation for that activity.

However, discretion is required in cases of temporary suspension (e.g. resulting from the temporary (short annual leave or sickness) absence of a signatory) provided that no endorsed reports are being issued.

- 14.3 Where accreditation for all activities has been withdrawn from a laboratory or terminated, the laboratory is no longer a customer of the accreditation body. In such cases, legal actions through copyright, fair trading or other laws may be necessary.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 The integrity of accreditation depends on accreditation bodies and their accredited laboratories taking joint responsibility for the proper claims of accreditation status and use of accreditation symbols, and for improving the reputation and value of accreditation for the benefit of all accredited laboratories, their customers and other users of test and calibration results.

16. REFERENCES

- 16.1 ISO/IEC 17000 Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles.
- 16.2 ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.