

Materials Characterisation

Summary of the 5th Accreditation Advisory Committee Meeting

This meeting took place on 15th April 2025 at NATA, Level 2, 2–6 Railway Parade, Camberwell.

Committee membership

Since the last meeting in May 2023

- Committee membership is stable, with the Chair recently reappointed for a further 3 year term.
- Short term extensions were sought and approved for some members to stagger term expiry dates.
- There remains a skills gap for Coal and expressions of interest remain open. Overall coverage is otherwise adequate.

Reports from members

- Validation and MU: Laboratories continue to conflate validation with “more verification”; difficulties presenting MU and applying decision rules were noted. Information regarding validation/verification is now available to Technical assessors and facilities in the NATA Assessor Information Guidance, available on the website.
- Hydrogen fuel testing: ISO 21087 published; methods are complex at low ppb, with high instrument costs and currently no Australian facilities offering this testing. Technical Assessor coverage is anticipated to be manageable.
- Proficiency testing: A wider-range gas PT program is now available to the industry, which can support laboratories developing capability for trace-level gas analysis.
- APAS changes: Changes to the Australian Paint Approval Scheme (APAS) may lead to more laboratories seeking ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for testing previously covered by the scheme.

Stakeholder engagement

- Ongoing engagement with DISR on critical technologies; participation across critical minerals, materials and technologies standards committees (e.g. materials for specialty technologies, rare earths, nanotechnologies and lithium, among others).
- ABCB low-lead requirements: Mixed industry/regulator signals on testing pressure; one accredited facility for the analytical method and one applicant for the screening method.
- Coking Coal Technical Assessors: Pressure on suitable TAs for coking coal tests led to the development of a new Aide-Mémoire to support assessment activities. Laboratories undertaking this work, as well as AAC members, staff, and technical assessors, have all supported the project. The Aide-Memoire is expected to be trialled in the 3rd quarter of 2025 and be formally adopted for use by year’s end.
- Synthetic stone: New import ban raises expectations for silica testing; no standard method exists for determining “synthetic” stone through compositional testing. Accreditation for any such testing is likely to be covered by the Life Sciences Sector.



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Service descriptors (scope) and criteria

- New criteria: “Characterisation of Materials by X-ray Fluorescence, Laser-Induced Breakdown and Atomic Emission Techniques” published. This criteria is adapted from the previous guidance document addressing such testing.
- Scope descriptors: Ongoing restructuring to improve TA matching for assessments continues. Recently, Coal services have been revised.

Miscellaneous discussion

- Calibrations in oil & gas facilities: On assessment, it has been found that reliance on supplier-only calibration of equipment does not always meet the technical requirements for metrological traceability.

The next meeting is scheduled for the third quarter of 2026.