



# **General Accreditation Criteria**

## **Accreditation of new branch sites**

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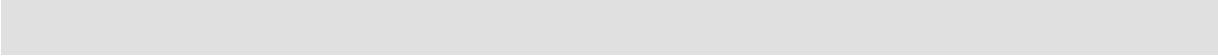
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## Purpose

It is recognised that a NATA accredited facility (referred to hereafter as the 'base' site) may establish a permanent branch (or satellite) site located away from the accredited base site and require accreditation for this site at short notice to service the needs of its customers.

This document details the criteria to allow the base site to claim accreditation for the activities (in whole or in part) performed at the branch site, prior to the latter site gaining accreditation in its own right.

This document is applicable to both single site and corporate facilities (refer also to the *General Accreditation Criteria: Corporate Accreditations - accreditation of multiple site facilities and/or facilities accredited in multiple programs*).

To be considered for accreditation of a new branch site, the base site must have a sound accreditation history with NATA. Facilities which have had significant non-conformities raised during assessments or with a history of not providing timely close-out of non-conformities, will not be considered.

This document does not apply to the following:

- where there is a specific provision for the establishment of short-term or project-specific sites (further information is available in the relevant *Specific Accreditation Criteria: Appendices and/or Annexes*);
- organisations that are recognised as compliant with the OECD *Principles of Good Laboratory Practice* undertaking activities at sites located away from the main facilities;
- activities performed at a client's premises where there is not an ongoing or permanent facility to which the branch site application pertains;  
**Note:** Activities performed at client's premises may be delivered from an established branch site where this is not prevented in the applicable accreditation criteria.
- medical imaging facilities (including DIAS);
- calibration facilities;
- analyses performed for Department of Agriculture and Water Resources purposes;
- for sleep disorders services (for such services, the *Specific Accreditation Criteria: Sleep Disorders Services - Accreditation of Branch Sites* apply);
- for geotechnical and civil construction materials annexes (for such testing, Appendix D in the *Specific Accreditation Criteria: ISO/IEC 17025 Application Document, Infrastructure and Asset Integrity - Annex, Geotechnical and civil construction materials testing* apply);
- where other regulatory requirements are applicable, for example, pathology facilities seeking Medicare Benefit payments.

As a signatory to the ILAC and APAC Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA), NATA is obligated to encourage facilities seeking accreditation in economies other than Australia, to do so with the local Accreditation Body (AB) of those economies in the first instance. Accordingly, this document will not generally be applicable to the establishment of branch sites in other economies.

Further advice can be provided by contacting your NATA Client Coordinator on the application of this document in relation to the facility's particular circumstances.

## **Specific requirements relating to a new branch site and how to apply for accreditation**

### **Applying for accreditation of a branch site**

The Authorised Representative of the base site is encouraged to hold discussions with their NATA Client Coordinator prior to lodging a formal written request for the accreditation of a new branch site. This discussion will help determine the applicability of this criteria document.

Should this criteria document be applicable, the Authorised Representative must submit a written request to the Client Coordinator together with supporting documentation addressing the criteria detailed below. The documentation provided will be reviewed and the Authorised Representative advised if further information is required. This review is a chargeable activity in accordance with NATA's current *Fee Schedule* available from our website.

Once NATA has determined the criteria have been satisfied, the Authorised Representative will be advised and requested to complete the relevant application form for the branch site. Upon receipt of the completed form and payment of the application fee (in accordance with the current *Fee Schedule*), formal notification that the activities offered by the branch site are covered by the accreditation of the base site will be provided along with the updated Scope of Accreditation of the base site.

Accreditation for the activities performed by the branch site can only be claimed under the Scope of Accreditation of the base site once written notification from NATA is received.

### **Criteria**

All of the following criteria must be satisfied:

- 1) The base site must have a sound accreditation history with NATA. If the base site forms part of a corporate accreditation, then the entire facility must have a sound accreditation history;
- 2) The base site must have held accreditation with NATA for at least one full assessment cycle;
- 3) The base site must ensure that there are no regulatory or client requirements which would preclude it from applying for branch site accreditation;
- 4) The scope of activities performed by the branch site must be the same as, or a subset of, the activities conducted at the base site as described in the base site's Scope of Accreditation. Activities performed at the branch site

- that are not covered by the Scope of Accreditation of the base site cannot be considered;
- 5) The branch site must comply with all relevant NATA accreditation criteria;
  - 6) The base site's management system must be implemented at the branch site and at least one internal audit of the branch site must have been conducted;
  - 7) Supervision of the branch site must be provided by the base site and appropriate records demonstrating this must be maintained;
  - 8) The competence of staff employed at the branch site together with their authorisation to perform specific activities, must be established by the base site with appropriate records maintained;
  - 9) Methods/procedures (or related activities), techniques, key analytical equipment and quality control processes (or other measures to monitor the quality of results) at the branch site must be the same type as those employed at the base site and must be suitably verified before use;
  - 10) At least one proficiency testing (PT) activity for each major area of test, measurement or related activity to be covered by the Scope of Accreditation at the branch site must have been performed and results available, together with a PT participation plan in accordance with *General Accreditation Criteria: Proficiency Testing Policy* and any associated proficiency testing criteria detailed in the relevant *Specific Accreditation Criteria: Appendices and/or Annexes*;
  - 11) The facility must be able to identify the site at which activities were performed (i.e. at the branch site);
  - 12) Results on activities performed by the branch site may only be reported by the base site. These reports must include the name of the base site in which the accreditation is held and also the location of the branch site.

Records demonstrating compliance with the above must be available during the initial assessment of the branch site and may be subject to review.

### **Initial assessment of branch sites and maintaining the base sites accreditation to establish branch sites**

The branch site must undergo an initial assessment within six months of the abovementioned notification and it is expected that accreditation will be achieved within six months of the assessment. Failure on behalf of the facility to meet these timeframes will result in NATA no longer recognising that the branch site is covered by the accreditation of the base site.

Where removal of recognition has occurred, the branch site's application will remain current for accreditation in its own right for the 24 months from the date the application form was signed and dated by the Authorised Representative. In such a case, the application will be treated as per NATA's normal procedures for the accreditation of a single stand-alone site or a site forming part of a corporate accreditation. Refer to the *NATA Procedures for accreditation* available from the NATA website for further information.

Records relating to activities conducted at the branch site whilst it was operational must be available for review at either the initial assessment of the branch site or the next scheduled visit of the base site (where an initial assessment of the branch site did not proceed for whatever reason). Failure to have these records available for review or where significant non-conformities are found may result in some or all of the reports issued containing work performed at the branch site to be withdrawn and affected clients required to be advised. Further, the eligibility of the base site to establish branch sites may be suspended.

## References

This section lists publications referenced in this document. The year of publication is not included as it is expected that only current versions of the references shall be used.

### NATA Publications

<i>General Accreditation Criteria</i>	<i>Corporate Accreditations - accreditation of multiple site facilities and/or facilities accredited in multiple programs</i>
<i>General Accreditation Criteria</i>	<i>Proficiency Testing Policy</i>
<i>Specific Accreditation Criteria:</i>	<i>Appendices and/or Annexes (as relevant to the facility's scope of accreditation)</i>
<i>Specific Accreditation Criteria:</i>	<i>ISO/IEC 17025 Application Document, Infrastructure and Asset Integrity - Annex Geotechnical and civil construction materials testing</i>
<i>Specific Accreditation Criteria:</i>	<i>Sleep Disorders Services - Accreditation of Branch Sites</i>

*NATA Fee Schedule*

*NATA Procedures for accreditation*

## Amendment table

The table below provides a summary of changes made to the document with this issue.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
Whole document	Editorial revised with no changes made to the criteria.
Purpose	Additional clarification provided that this document does not apply to Sleep Disorders Services or to Geotechnical and Civil Construction Materials Testing annex facilities.