



Specific Accreditation Guidance

Infrastructure and Asset Integrity

Facilities engaging external resources to meet project requirements

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Facilities engaging external resources to meet project requirements

1 Accreditation coverage provided from another site within an organisation

In some cases the scope of accreditation for a site may not cover all the required testing for a particular project and a facility may seek to send staff (and possibly equipment) from one of its sites holding accreditation for such work to assist another of its sites to perform testing on an individual project.

In general, technical control over testing (including reporting aspects) is to be provided by the site holding accreditation and so, for the above situation, the technical control of the externally supplied testing is provided by a different base site than the technical control for the everyday testing on the project. Notification to NATA of such arrangements would be expected, subject to any additional provisions which may be specified in the applicable *General Accreditation Criteria: ISO/IEC 17025 Application Document Annex* for the type of testing being undertaken.

In terms of supplying test results to the client (ISO/IEC 17025 Section 7.8), the base site for the externally supplied testing can directly issue the report covering this testing only or, if the report needs to capture all testing carried out, the other facility can issue the full report provided it contains a note identifying the accredited site which was responsible for the externally supplied testing. In the latter case, the externally supplied testing data does need to be reviewed by an authorised person and there needs to be a mechanism for ensuring that this occurs.

2 Engaging services that are external to the organisation

Subcontracting (externally provided services) of testing, to an external organisation, is covered by ISO/IEC 17025 clause 6.6. However, the situation can become less clear where accredited facilities are supplementing internal resources with external resources. In particular, conflicts can arise in regard to allocation of responsibility.

Two scenarios that can occur in relation to deployment for major projects are considered below.

Scenario 1

Conflicts in relation to authority over testing (ISO/IEC 17025 clauses 4 and 5) can arise in cases where a facility is a subcontractor (external provider) providing services that form part of the testing process but where the contracting facility seeks to retain control over aspects of the testing, which may have been formalised within the terms of the contract.

Clearly, it is not acceptable for an accredited facility to 'rubber stamp' testing over which it has no control, where such work falls within the scope of NATA accreditation of the subcontractor. However, with appropriate measures undertaken with the agreement of the subcontractor, such situations need not be intractable.

For example, the subcontractor is required to perform testing in accordance with its own systems and procedures but, if the contracting facility has specified different processes, the subcontractor is entitled to review these and, if appropriate, reference these within its own management system. Similarly, the subcontractor is required to have procedures for verifying the performance of any equipment or consumables but, if these are to be supplied by the contracting facility, the subcontractor is entitled to use them provided it can demonstrate that all appropriate requirements are met.

In cases where the contracting facility seeks to provide their own report covering the testing, such reports may include test results obtained from the subcontractor but need to identify the subcontracted results.

Note: Refer to *General Accreditation Criteria: Use of the NATA emblem, NATA endorsement and references to accreditation.*

The overarching principle here is that the testing can only be considered to have been performed within the accreditation criteria if the facility carrying out the testing retains direct responsibility over all aspects of the testing. This applies even where there is a legal relationship between the contracting and subcontracted facilities, such as might apply for a joint venture arrangement, which is a reasonably common situation for construction projects.

Scenario 2

Conflicts with regard to personnel responsibilities can also arise in cases where external personnel are engaged through a third party entity to carry out testing. Such third parties might desire to retain responsibility for the training/competence of the supplied personnel (and may be their direct employer). Situations also arise where the third party supplying the testing personnel may at the same time have a commercial interest in an asset which is to be tested by these personnel.

Where external personnel are engaged, as per ISO/IEC 17025, Clause 6.2.1, the facility is to ensure that all applicable NATA Accreditation Criteria relating to staff are implemented in the same manner as they apply to internal personnel. This means that:

- there must be a current arrangement (e.g. contract between the facility and external personnel (or their employer as the case may be)) and this must clearly define the role, responsibilities and authorities of the consultant/contractor when carrying out work for the accredited facility;
- the consultant/contractor must be subject to the accredited facility's internal system for competency assessment and any authorisation, as applicable, to conduct testing without supervision and/or to release test results to clients;
- the accredited facility retains responsibility for ensuring that all aspects of the NATA Accreditation Criteria are met with respect to the contracted personnel, including maintaining currency of any necessary qualifications and visual acuity;
- the consultant/contractor must have demonstrated familiarity with all relevant aspects of the facility's management system;
- the consultant/contractor must undertake to hold confidential the information relating to the accredited facility's clients;

- the consultant/contractor must be free of external pressures or constraints (such as those arising from any external employment arrangements) which could affect their ability to carry out their responsibilities effectively and impartially.

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.

Standards

ISO/IEC 17025 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories

NATA publications

NATA Accreditation Criteria (NAC) package for Manufactured Goods

General Accreditation Criteria Use of the NATA emblem, NATA endorsement and references to accreditation

Amendment Table

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

Section or Clause	Amendment
Scenario 2 - page 5	Additional detail included regarding third party supply of personnel for projects.