



ILAC Guidelines on Qualifications and Competence of Assessors and Technical Experts

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INTRODUCTION

1. GENERAL

1.1 Preamble

The process of accreditation of a laboratory or inspection body includes an on-site assessment of the laboratory or inspection body by one or more assessors including a lead assessor, (commonly referred to as an assessment team) who may be full-time employees of the accreditation body or part-time personnel contracted by the body to perform specific tasks. The assessment team may also be supplemented by technical experts.

Assessors and technical experts play a vital role for the accreditation body. The effectiveness and credibility of an accreditation body depends on the competence, professionalism and integrity of its assessors and technical experts. In order to be accepted and recognized internationally, an accreditation system must comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011, including the need to have an effective system for ensuring the competence of its assessors and technical experts by establishing, implementing and maintaining procedures for qualifying and monitoring the performance and competence of the personnel involved. In particular, the accreditation body shall review the performance and competence of its personnel in order to identify training needs.

1.2 Purpose

This document provides application guidance on ISO/IEC 17011 requirements for procedures for selecting, training, approving and monitoring the performance of assessors and technical experts and describes criteria for lead assessors and technical assessors and experts. It does not address specific administrative qualifications for case officers (see 1.5 Definitions) who may be used by some accreditation bodies.

This document also provides recommended criteria and guidance to laboratory and inspection body accreditation bodies for selecting, training and qualifying their assessors and technical experts, and evaluating their performance in order to establish their competence.

1.3 Authorship

ILAC G11:1998 was prepared by the ILAC Technical Accreditation Issues Committee (TAIC).

ILAC G11:2006 was revised by the ILAC Accreditation Committee (formerly known as the TAIC) and approved for publication following a successful 60 day ballot of the ILAC voting membership in 2006.

1.4 References

ISO/IEC 17020	General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection
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ISO/IEC 17025	General requirement for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories
ISO/IEC Guide 43	(Part 1) Development and Operation of Proficiency Testing Schemes
ISO/IEC Guide 43	(Part 2) Selection and Use of Proficiency Testing Schemes by Laboratory
ISO/IEC 17011	General requirements for bodies providing assessment and accreditation of conformity assessment bodies
ISO 19011	Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing
ISO 5725	Accuracy (Trueness and Precision) of measurement Methods and Results
IAF/ILAC A3	IAF/ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement: Key Performance Indicators KPIs)
ILAC-G3	Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors Used by Laboratory Accreditation Schemes
ILAC-G22	Use of Proficiency Testing as a Tool for Accreditation in Testing

1.5 Definitions

Lead Assessor – Assessor who is given overall responsibility for specified assessment activities. See also Section 2.2.2.6.

Note 1 – A lead assessor may also conduct the assessment of the management system or act as a technical assessor during the same assessment.

Assessor – person assigned by an accreditation body to perform, alone or as part of an assessment team, an assessment of a laboratory or inspection body.

Technical Assessor – an assessor who conducts the assessment of the technical competence of the laboratory or inspection body for specific area(s) of the desired scope of accreditation.

Note 2 – An assessor or technical assessor may also conduct assessment of the management system, if deemed competent to do so.

Case Officer – Accreditation body personnel who provides advice on the policies, procedures and regulations of the accreditation body and may act as a lead assessor, technical assessor or technical expert, if he/she has the relevant assessor qualifications.

Note 3 – Lead assessors serve as the leader of a team (2 or more members) made up of assessors, technical assessors, technical experts and/or case officers. If deemed qualified by the accreditation body (see Section 2.2.2.6) assessors, technical assessors and case officers may serve in the lead assessor role.

Technical Expert – a person assigned by an accreditation body to provide specific knowledge or expertise with respect to the scope of accreditation to be assessed; is a team member who provides technical advice but is not considered as an assessor unless he/she has the relevant assessor qualifications and training.

Note 4 – By definition, therefore, technical experts, without a basic understanding of the standard used for accreditation (ISO/IEC 17025, ISO 15189 or ISO/IEC 17020) and the accreditation body’s relevant policies and procedures, must always be escorted by a qualified assessor. (“Escorted” means close supervision throughout the assessment activity.)

1.6 Functions of Persons Involved in Assessment

An assessment team needs to be comprised of individuals who have the necessary technical knowledge to cover the desired scope of accreditation, knowledge in applying the accreditation standard and good communications and interpersonal skills to competently perform an assessment.

Table 1				
Summary of Functions of Persons Involved in Assessments				
Function	Lead Assessor	Technical Assessor	Case Officer	Technical Expert
			<i>(not commonly used)</i>	
Conduct assessment of technical competence in specific areas of testing, calibration and inspection	o	p	o	
Conduct assessment of the management system	p	o	o	
Lead and coordinate activities among team members	p		o	
Provide advice on policies, requirements and regulations of accreditation body	p	o	p	
Provide technical expertise	o	p	o	p
p - primary function; o - other possible functions				

2. CRITERIA FOR ASSESSORS

2.1 Assessor Attributes (based on ISO 19011)

2.1.1 Assessors should:

- 2.1.1.1 Be open minded and mature and willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view;
- 2.1.1.2 Possess sound judgment, analytical skills, and tenacity;
- 2.1.1.3 Have the ability to perceive situations in a realistic way to understand complex operations from a broad perspective and to understand the role of individual units within an organization;
- 2.1.1.4 Be able to distinguish crucial or essential points from less important ones;
- 2.1.1.5 Be ethical – fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet;
- 2.1.1.6 Be diplomatic – tactful in dealing with people;
- 2.1.1.7 Be observant – actively aware of physical surroundings and activities and habits;
- 2.1.1.8 Be tenacious – persistent, focused on achieving objectives;
- 2.1.1.9 Be decisive – reaches timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis; and
- 2.1.1.10 Be self-reliant – acts and functions independently while interacting effectively with others.

2.1.2 Assessors should be able to apply the attributes of 2.1.1 in order to:

- 2.1.2.1 Obtain and assess objective evidence fairly;
- 2.1.2.2 Remain true to the purpose of the assessment without fear or favor;
- 2.1.2.3 Evaluate constantly the effects of assessment observations and personal interactions during an assessment;
- 2.1.2.4 Treat concerned personnel in a way that will best achieve the assessment objective;
- 2.1.2.5 React with sensitivity to the national conventions of the country in which the assessment is performed;
- 2.1.2.6 Perform the assessment process without deviating due to distractions;
- 2.1.2.7 Commit full attention and support to the assessment process;

- 2.1.2.8 React effectively in stressful situations;
- 2.1.2.9 Arrive at generally acceptable conclusions based on objective evidence collected during assessments;
- 2.1.2.10 Remain true to a conclusion despite pressure to change that is not based on objective evidence.

2.2 Knowledge and Skills

2.2.1 Knowledge of and skills in applying accreditation criteria.

- 2.1.2.1 Assessors and technical assessors should understand the criteria in the standard used in accreditation (i.e., ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/IEC 17020 and ISO 15189) and the accreditation body's policies applicable to the desired scope of accreditation.;
- 2.1.2.2 Technical experts should understand the fundamental basis for the requirements in the standard used in accreditation (i.e., ISO/IEC 17025, ISO 15189 or ISO/IEC 17020) and the accreditation body's policies;
- 2.1.2.3 Assessors should also appropriately interpret and apply the criteria to actual assessment situations.

2.2.2. Knowledge of and skills in applying assessment and quality principles, practices and techniques.

- 2.2.2.1 Assessors should possess the knowledge and skills to apply assessment principles, practices and techniques to actual assessment situations and apply them to different assessments and still ensure that the assessments are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner. This knowledge and these skills include all the steps in the assessment process including planning, preparing, performing, reporting, following up on issues, verifying closure of non compliances from previous assessments, and closing the assessment;
- 2.2.2.2 Assessors should be skilled in assessment performance techniques including interviewing, audit tracing or trailing, managing time, listening, audit sampling, communicating orally and in writing, collecting assessment evidence, and analyzing assessment observations and drawing appropriate conclusions while maintaining the confidentiality and security of assessment information;
- 2.2.2.3 Assessors should have a general knowledge of quality systems and processes typical of the type of laboratory or inspection body to be assessed. This may include, but not be limited to: historical data, quality policy and objectives, quality planning, test and/or calibration method and/or inspection procedure design, validation and implementation, quality control, quality assurance, corrective and preventive actions, and implementation of continuous improvement.

- 2.2.2.4 Assessors should be able to comprehend the organizational size, structure, functions and relationships of the body under assessment; its general business processes and related terminology; and the cultural and social customs of the its personnel;
- 2.2.2.5 Assessors and technical experts may need the technical skill and ability to determine that quality tools used by the body under assessment are effectively implemented and utilized;
- 2.2.2.6 Lead assessors should have additional knowledge and skills including:
- 2.2.2.6.1 Assisting in the selection of team members, if relevant and applicable;
 - 2.2.2.6.2 Preparing the assessment plan and making effective use of resources during the assessment;
 - 2.2.2.6.3 Leading the assessment team;
 - 2.2.2.6.4 Providing direction and guidance to assessors-in-training and technical experts;
 - 2.2.2.6.5 Preventing and resolving conflicts;
 - 2.2.2.6.6 Making decisions relating to the assessment;
 - 2.2.2.6.7 Leading the assessment team to reach conclusions;
 - 2.2.2.6.8 Representing the assessment team with the management of the laboratory or inspection body; and
 - 2.2.2.6.9 Drafting, coordinating and submitting the assessment report in such a way that it allows the accreditation body and the assessed organization to take actions and decisions.
- 2.2.3 Technical Knowledge of Specific Laboratory or Inspection Body Practices.
- Technical assessors and experts must possess specific knowledge as required by part or all of the scope of accreditation, including:
- 2.2.3.1 Proper performance of the relevant testing and calibration methods and inspection activities;
 - 2.2.3.2 Estimation of measurement uncertainty;
 - 2.2.3.3 Competence in analysis of proficiency testing results including:
 - 2.2.3.3.1 Interpretation of the assigned value and acceptability criteria in all relevant types of proficiency testing , including interlaboratory comparisons and measurement

audits, in order to afford a critical evaluation of quantitative and qualitative results of laboratories;

2.2.3.3.2 Relevant knowledge about standards and guidelines on organization, performance and evaluation of interlaboratory comparisons, e.g. ISO/IEC Guide 43; ISO 5725 B1.1-6;

2.2.3.3.3 Use of different types of proficiency testing for accreditation purposes appropriate to the work of the laboratory being assessed and in basic principles for proficiency testing;

Note 5 – For practical guidelines for assessors in use of all types of proficiency testing in accreditation, see ANNEX 1 of ILAC-G22, “Use of Proficiency Testing as a Tool for Accreditation in Testing”.

2.2.3.4 Test, calibration and inspection requirements and the technical basis for those requirements;

2.2.3.5 Typical problem areas associated with the tests, calibrations and inspections;

2.2.3.6 Specific external requirements relating to the accreditation scope (e.g., regulations, codes and standards);

2.2.3.7 Laboratory or inspection body organization and terminology associated with those tests, calibrations, inspections and related processes.

2.2.4 Technical assessors and experts performing inspection body assessments must possess specific knowledge of the inspection body practices within the desired scope of accreditation, including:

Knowledge of inspection requirements and methods;

Knowledge of inspection and reporting processes including inspection techniques;

Knowledge of products/processes inspected;

Knowledge of applicable legislation and safety practices;

Knowledge of sampling methods, where relevant;

Ability to assess Type A, B, C status (lead assessors only), and

Knowledge of assessment techniques including techniques used for assessing professional judgment.

3. DEMONSTRATION OF ASSESSOR COMPETENCE

3.1 General

Assessors need to be competent in order to effectively plan and conduct assessments and report assessment results. An assessor's competence is based on the foundation provided by education, training and experience. Assessor competence is measured by the demonstration of the application of specific assessor knowledge, skills and personal attributes, as described in Section 2.

3.2 Methods of demonstration and evaluation of assessor competence

Various methods may be used by accreditation bodies to evaluate the competence of assessors. These methods should be used in an appropriate combination to give the required level of confidence in assessor competence. Demonstration and evaluation of assessor competence include, but are not limited to the following methods:

- 3.2.1 Examination/testing/training evaluation. Written or oral examination may be used to determine an assessor's knowledge and skills (Section 2.2) as appropriate to the needs of the accreditation body.
- 3.2.2 Demonstration. The planned and formal witnessing of specific assessor skill performance, such as in role play situations.
- 3.2.3 Formal evaluation. The formal, planned and structured witnessing and evaluation of assessor performance during an actual assessment.
- 3.2.4 Casual observation. The unplanned or informal witnessing of limited assessor performance. This observation could take place in actual assessment or other situations in which assessment skills or personal attributes can be observed.
- 3.2.5 Documentation. Recorded information, such as resumes, assessment logs, training certificates, transcripts, certifications, and professional licenses.
- 3.2.6 Attestation. Oral or written statement; a testimonial. An attestation may give different levels of confidence depending on the credibility and independence of the provider.
- 3.2.7 Verification. An independent check or provision of additional objective evidence obtained to support other methods of evaluating competency, such as attestation and documentation.
- 3.2.8 Review of previous work. The review of assessor reports, completed checklists, assessment plans or other writing samples.
- 3.2.9 Interview. Interviews may involve one or more interviewers and the use of selection boards or evaluation panels. Interviews may also be used to verify evidence from other sources.

3.3 Competence with accreditation criteria and reference documents

Assessors and technical experts should demonstrate an awareness and understanding of accreditation criteria and appropriate reference documents, and the application of these requirements to assessment situations relevant to their assigned assessment functions. Assessors and technical experts should be able to:

- 3.3.1 Identify compliance to requirements;
- 3.3.2 Evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of fulfilling these requirements, when appropriate; and
- 3.3.3 Relate any non-conformities found to the corresponding accreditation requirements.

Note 6 – Examination, formal observation and demonstration are useful for determining competence in this area.

- 3.4 Competence with assessment principles, practices and techniques
Assessors should demonstrate knowledge and skills in using assessment principles, practices and techniques.

Note 7 – Examination, formal observation and demonstration are useful for determining competence in this area.

4. SELECTION AND INITIAL QUALIFICATION

4.1 General

For each type of person involved in assessment, accreditation bodies should have documented procedures and criteria for selection and use of persons having suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, and experience for their assigned assessment function(s). This section, together with Section 5, “Training and Professional Development”, Section 6, “Evaluation of Performance”, and Section 7, “Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Integrity”, provides detailed guidance and recommends minimum criteria for the acceptance of lead assessors, technical assessors and technical experts.

4.2 Selection Criteria

The criteria used by accreditation bodies for selection of assessor candidates should be performance oriented and flexible enough so that assessor suitability is judged on a case-by-case basis taking into account factors such as education and demonstrated working knowledge, working experience, training, and assessment experience, communication/interpersonal skills and auditing skills. Accrediting bodies should use a combination of these factors in either ranking and/or establishing minimum qualification requirements for potential assessor candidates. The following sections present recommendations for minimum criteria.

- 4.2.1 Education. Accreditation bodies should require at least post-secondary qualification in a scientific/technological discipline. In some cases, extensive experience in the relevant fields of expertise may be substituted for formal qualification. Degree of technical knowledge and testing, calibration and/or inspection expertise should be established, if possible, through actual examination, demonstration and/or documentation. (See Section 3.2) If this is not possible, then attestation from technical peers to confirm the relevance of their educational and "knowledge" credentials should be obtained.

- 4.2.2 Working Experience. For lead assessors, accreditation bodies should require at least four years of experience in a technical field, two of which should be in quality management, quality assurance or quality system auditing related to laboratory and/or inspection activities. For technical assessors and technical experts, accreditation bodies should require at least four years of experience in laboratory testing or calibration and/or inspection, two of which should be in the assigned field of assessment. Depending upon the complexity and sophistication of the field, these minimum numbers of years may need to be increased.
- 4.2.3 Training. For lead assessors, accreditation bodies should require successful completion of a training course or a combination of training courses which covers the topics as specified in ILAC-G3: 1994, "Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors Used by Laboratory Accreditation Schemes". For technical assessors, accreditation bodies should require successful completion of a training course or a combination of training courses which covers the topics as specified in Appendix I, Training Course Outline for Technical Assessors".
- 4.2.3.1 The framework of the requirements for training of inspection body assessors should be the same as in Section 4.2.3 but the content should cover the corresponding issues of inspection body accreditation.
- 4.2.4 Assessment Experience. For lead assessors, accreditation bodies should require sufficient assessment experience using relevant accreditation criteria such as ISO/IEC 17025, ISO 15189 or ISO 17020 in the capacity of an assessor or have understudied five assessments using ISO/IEC 17025, ISO 15189 or ISO/IEC 17020 or equivalent criteria accompanied by a lead assessor. For technical assessors, accreditation bodies should require the equivalent of attendance at one or more assessments as observers.
- 4.2.5 Language Proficiency. Assessors and technical experts should be proficient in both the spoken and written language of the accreditation body. Where an assessment takes place in which part or all of the assessment is conducted in a language other than that spoken and written by the assessor, an interpreter (provided independently from the body being assessed) should be used.

Note 8 - Scoring Systems: Accreditation bodies may find it useful to establish formal scoring systems which define minimum credits for a combination of education, experience and training in order to be considered as an assessor. After attaining the minimum credits, candidates are evaluated for suitability to conduct assessments using additional competency-based criteria.

5. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 General

Accreditation bodies should have documented procedures for both initial training as well as ongoing training of its assessors.

5.2 Initial Training

Accreditation bodies should have processes for initially training people to ensure a high level of confidence that they can competently perform on their first assessment.

- 5.2.1 If actual performance during the first one or more assessments is not satisfactory, the assessor candidate should either not be used further or, if not of a technical nature, additional training and/or counseling should be provided.
- 5.2.2 Accreditation bodies should establish formal apprenticeship (also called assessor development or grandfathering) programs in which assessors progress through a series of levels, typically from an assessor-in-training level to technical and/or lead assessor level based upon successful completion of a certain number of assessments at each level coupled with acceptable performance.
- 5.2.3 Activities of an assessor in training may range from observing a qualified assessor, usually on the first one or two assessments, to carrying out the assessment, partially or in full, under the supervision of a qualified assessor.
- 5.3 Ongoing Training
Accreditation bodies should provide for their qualified assessors 'refresher' training sessions and periodic short courses to help keep them updated on evolving procedures and requirements and to give them an opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other.
- 5.3.1 Accreditation bodies should organize special meetings, as appropriate, for assessors, and, where relevant technical experts, in specific fields to discuss specific problem areas. This promotes consistency of assessment and overall improvement in the accreditation process.
- 5.3.2 These training activities should be held regularly. Accreditation bodies should consider requiring assessors to attend a minimum percentage of these periodic training activities over a multi-year period in order to maintain their status as an approved assessor.
- 5.4 Professional Development
Accreditation bodies should encourage and, as necessary, require their assessors and technical experts to undertake various activities of ongoing professional development including:
- 5.4.1 Continuing education. Assessors and technical experts should continually update their knowledge and skills through attendance at relevant courses, seminars, workshops and assessor training sessions.
- 5.4.2 Development activities. In addition to continuing education, other helpful professional development activities include participating in professional societies, conferences, and standards writing bodies.
- 5.4.3 Tutoring. Participation as a tutor or instructor in a formal course related to assessment practice helps to develop further knowledge.
- 5.4.4 Mentoring. Overseeing and evaluating others perform assessments often provides useful insights for improving assessment practice.

6. EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE

6.1 General

Ensuring competent performance of assessment is essential. Accordingly, accreditation bodies need to have a formal program and procedures for both the initial evaluation and the ongoing evaluation of the performance of their assessors.

6.2 Initial Evaluation

Accreditation bodies need to monitor and evaluate on-site the initial assessment(s) of new assessors usually with experienced staff, lead or technical assessors and/or case officers performing the on-site evaluation. The criteria used should be consistent with Section 2, but should be tailored to reflect the accreditation body's specific policies and procedures for the proper conduct of assessments. Accreditation bodies should also consider using feedback from the laboratories regarding their assessments and feedback from reviewers of assessor reports as part of their evaluation of assessor performance.

6.3 Ongoing Evaluation

Accreditation bodies need to monitor ongoing performance of their assessors using a planned combination of the following ways.

- 6.3.1 Formal Observation. Qualified personnel of the accreditation body conduct on-site audits and report on the performance of assessors and recommended appropriate follow-up to improve performance. All assessors should be audited periodically at least once every three years or more frequently if there are no other ways of establishing an assessor's continued mental acuity and physical stamina to perform assessments.
- 6.3.2 Reviewing Assessor Reports. Qualified personnel of the accreditation body check the assessor's report of findings and completed documentation such as checklists to ensure appropriate interpretation of requirements, adequate documentation of evidence, and clarity of writing. These checks should be done systematically and documented for suitable feedback to the assessors.
- 6.3.3 Collecting Feedback from Laboratories and Inspection Bodies. Soliciting oral and written feedback from accredited bodies can be a very useful tool to supplement the assessor performance evaluation program. Careful consideration must be given to the timing and veracity of this feedback since the accredited body may think honest criticism will have a negative impact on the accreditation decision. The collection of laboratory and inspection body feedback should be done systematically and documented for suitable feedback to the assessors.
- 6.3.4 Collecting Feedback from Team Members. Oral and written feedback from peer assessors (solicited or unsolicited) can also serve as a useful tool towards evaluating the particular assessor and adding to the uniformity of the assessment process because of the differing points of view that may be discerned.
- 6.3.5 Casual Observation. The unplanned or informal witnessing of limited assessor performance can be useful. This observation could take place in actual assessment or other situations, such as group meetings and refresher training, in which assessment skills or personal attributes can be observed.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST, CONFIDENTIALITY AND INTEGRITY

7.1 Conflict of Interest

Accreditation bodies should establish policies and procedures to help ensure that before accepting a specific assignment, an assessor or technical expert discloses to the body any professional, financial and work-related interest that could be construed as a conflict of interest.

7.2 Confidentiality

Assessors and technical experts should sign an agreement of confidentiality guaranteeing that all information received from and about each assessed body is held in strict confidence and no confidential information should be disclosed without the written permission of the accredited body, unless the law requires such information to be disclosed without such consent.

7.3 Integrity

Accreditation bodies should have arrangements to ensure that assessors and technical experts are not subjected to undue influence or pressures that might affect their integrity.

7.4 Impartiality

Assessors and technical experts should act objectively and should be free from any undue commercial, financial or other pressures which could compromise impartiality.

7.5 Consultancy

Accreditation Bodies should not allow their assessors to consult with accredited bodies that they have assessed, at least until such time as the responsibility for the issues of that particular accredited body have been fully discharged (e.g. a new assessment team has been assigned).

APPENDIX I

TRAINING COURSE OUTLINE FOR TECHNICAL ASSESSORS

Potential technical assessors should be required to attend a training course that covers the following topics:

- a. Introduction to background on accreditation body and to accreditation in general;
- b. For laboratory accreditation, ISO/IEC 17025 and its application in specific fields of testing and calibration; ISO 15189 and its application in specific fields of the medical laboratory accreditation; and for inspection body, ISO/IEC 17020 and its application in specific fields of inspection;
- c. Examining the results of internal audits and management reviews;
- d. Calibration and traceability of measurement:
 - calibration hierarchy
 - uncertainties
- e. Proficiency testing (for inspection bodies only when testing is involved);
- f. The problems of assessing the type A, B and C status of an inspection body;
- g. How to assess the competence of the inspection body to exercise professional judgment and the laboratory to form opinions and interpretations;
- h. Human aspects of assessment tailored to national characteristics;
 - communication skills
 - skills needed to establish information in an objective, friendly and professional manner;
- i. Conduct of assessments:
 - assessment of technical competence and related quality management systems
 - report observations including nonconformities;
- j. Dummy assessment:
 - Examination of case study for assessment of imaginary laboratory or inspection body against accreditation criteria;
 - Report back by each group in turn to management with presentation of outcome of assessment and nonconformities identified;
- k. Feedback by course tutors; and
- l. Question and answer session.

The performance of potential technical assessors in training courses should be assessed consistent with Section 6 of ILAC-G3, "Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors Used by Laboratory Accreditation Schemes. Similar procedures should be adapted for inspection body technical assessors.