

SUBJECT: TTLABS Remote Assessments

TTLABS would like to advise **ALL** laboratories and other interested parties that, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and as part of the national drive to safeguard the health of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, all assessments will be conducted remotely, or via other techniques as deemed suitable, until further notice. Remote assessments are assessments of a physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body, using electronic means (ISO/IEC 17011:2017, 3.26).

Remote assessments will follow the same stages as the on-site assessment except for the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate the interactions that occur during the on-site visit. It is recommended that stakeholders take the following actions in order to facilitate such mechanisms.

- i. Check your IT systems and ensure that access is granted to one of the following web-conferencing solutions: Skype, Cisco Webex, Zoom Meeting, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet.

Note: A license is not required to utilize these platforms, where TTLABS is the host.

- ii. Inform TTLABS if there is a different platform that your organization may prefer over the abovementioned tools. Once TTLABS can access the programme securely it can be used alternatively to conduct activities. TTLABS requires agreement by our stakeholders to utilize any platform recommended to conduct activities. A trial must also be accommodated by the laboratory at least one (1) week before the actual assessment to ensure systems are working properly.
- iii. Ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid abuses that could compromise integrity of activities being conducted. Inform TTLABS if you have any special security requirements for the use of ICT tools.
- iv. Ensure staff are familiar with the technology prior to conducting activities to manage audio, screen sharing and other features to avoid unnecessary delays.
- v. For live streaming, check that you can live stream with visual and 2-way audio at the location. Ensure that mobile networks or wireless connections are available to run the live stream.
- vi. If on-line connectivity fails or is not possible, then conduct of activities via telephone conferencing and file sharing shall be explored.

Laboratories that are able to facilitate remote assessments shall make available the following information.

- i. Key personnel and top management that would facilitate interviews via telephone or web-conferencing as applicable during activities;
- ii. Documentation to be reviewed to determine conformance to relevant requirements. These may include, but are not limited to: internal audit programmes and reports, management review minutes, records of complaints, nonconforming work and corrective actions, risk assessments, competence records, proficiency testing (PT) and quality control (QC) data;
- iii. Witnessing of technical activities through live streaming, recordings, post audit reviews or technical interviews. Terms for recordings will need to be discussed and agreed upon. Post audit reviews will include selection of job files and interviews with the associated persons to

confirm activities. Technical interviews will include TTLABS technical assessors communicating with technical staff on key aspects of the technical activity.

It is the responsibility of the laboratory to ensure that it continues to provide competent, consistent, impartial and reliable services during this extraordinary period, even in the absence of independent on-site or other assessments.

Please note, where the Assessment Team experiences problems that can compromise the effectiveness of the assessment, given the allocated time constraints, they will have the power to stop the assessment following consultation with TTBS. This may include but is not limited to the following:

- i. problems with Internet access;
- ii. inaccessible documents and records, due to them not being available, or not being available in the appropriate format;
- iii. inadequate competence on the part of the assessee to use the online meeting software.

Where a laboratory is unable to facilitate a remote assessment due to ICT restrictions, especially where witnessing of the technical activities is necessary to determine competence or other plausible reason explained by the laboratory, assessment activities will be conducted using various techniques. In these cases, the laboratory will be contacted by TTLABS to give more information and arrange suitable activities.

TTLABS is kindly requesting that you share this message with your fellow laboratory colleagues to aid in the quick dissemination of this information. If you have any questions or require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us at 662-8827 ext. 2246/8/50 or 787-4157 or via emails below.

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Be safe and remember to practice good hygiene and social distancing over the coming period.



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KCL/asm

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