



TTLABS IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Service

Impartiality and Confidentiality Policy

1.0 TTLABS' MANDATE

Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Service, herein after called "TTLABS", is the national laboratory accrediting body of Trinidad and Tobago as mandated by the Standards Act Ch 82:03 and the Standards Regulations. The management of TTLABS believes and accepts impartiality and confidentiality to be critical fundamental principles for the operations of an accreditation body and therefore engender trust in TTLABS' services from its stakeholders.

2.0 TTLABS' MANAGEMENT OF RISK TO IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

TTLABS is a service of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS), a body corporate established by the Standards Act Ch 82:03 and Metrology Act Ch 82:06. Within this construct, TTLABS identifies, documents and implements strategies to eliminate and/or minimize any conflicts or potential conflicts of interest within its structure or with its related bodies. The implemented strategies to manage impartiality and confidentiality are periodically reviewed for effectiveness of elimination and/or minimizing the identified potential risks.

TTLABS operates such that impartiality and confidentiality are not compromised by commercial, financial or other pressures. Although TTBS contains services that are conflicts of interest to TTLABS, TTLABS does not itself participate in these activities. Additionally, the TTLABS accreditation services offered are strictly managed through the TTLABS Secretariat utilizing mainly external resources for the actual assessments and the decision-making process.

All permanent members of staff of the TTLABS Secretariat, members of the Laboratory Accreditation Committee and other Technical Committees, and the externally contracted assessors shall declare any potential conflicts of interest and agree to uphold the requirements for impartiality and confidentiality. This information is acted upon by the TTLABS Secretariat to ensure the presence of objectivity in the operations of TTLABS. All persons making accreditation decisions are competent and independent of the assessment activities conducted on the conformity assessment body under consideration. TTLABS also documents the process and reasons for decisions taken regarding its activities.

The TTLABS Laboratory Accreditation Committee, in addition to its role as the decision-making committee for the accreditation decisions, serves as a forum for the sharing of the activities of the Accreditation Body. It comprises persons representing the public service, private sector, conformity assessment bodies and academia. It advises on matters associated with impartiality, openness, public perception and the provision of services in a non-discriminatory manner. Feedback is also regularly sought from assessors, customers, potential customers and users of the conformity assessment services through, but not limited to, meetings, surveys and focus group sessions. This information is analysed and used to inform decisions on the services of the Accreditation Body and the identification of areas for improvement. TTLABS also shares publicly available information on gains/improvements made within the accreditation industry and/or quality improvements with Interested Parties and staff.

3.0 TTLABS' SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

TTLABS does not engage in activities which could compromise its impartiality including consultancy to conformity assessment bodies. TTLABS offers, in addition to accreditation services for laboratories to ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO 15189, generic training programmes to external parties on information that is freely available in the public domain. TTLABS facilitates the distribution of the One World Accuracy Proficiency Testing Programme for medical laboratories on behalf of the Ministry of Health. TTLABS at this time does not accredit proficiency testing providers and does not facilitate this outside of this arrangement. TTLABS also may offer advisory services to key stakeholders based on its area of expertise once it does not present a conflict of interest to the TTLABS' mandate to be the national laboratory accrediting body in Trinidad and Tobago.

The services of TTLABS are established and offered in a non-discriminatory manner and are available to all laboratories in Trinidad and Tobago and the region, regardless of size, number of laboratories accredited, or membership of any association or group, and once the technical expertise can be sourced to support the assessment process. No specific consultancy service is promoted and accreditation is not suggested to be easier, simpler, faster or less expensive if a particular consultancy or person is used.

4.0 MANAGEMENT OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

TTLABS manages all information obtained or created during the accreditation process with strict confidentiality. The laboratory is informed, in advance, of any information that TTLABS will be placing in the public domain. This policy, however, does not hold for information that the laboratory makes publicly available or that is agreed to between TTLABS and the laboratory.

The laboratory will be notified, unless prohibited by law, of the confidential information that may be released by TTLABS as required by law or authorised contractual arrangements. If TTLABS receives information about the laboratory from sources other than the laboratory, the information received will be confidential between the laboratory and TTLABS, except as required by law or authorised contractual arrangements. The source of the information will be confidential between the source and TTLABS, and shall not be shared with the laboratory unless agreed by the source. TTLABS is not liable for the actions taken by the source where the laboratory's information is concerned.

All permanent members of staff of the TTLABS Secretariat, members of the Laboratory Accreditation Committee and other Technical Committees, and the externally contracted assessors shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of TTLABS' activities, except as required by law. This is facilitated through the signing of LAS-Q006 Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, Intellectual Property and Duty of Loyalty Policy.