

## NATIONAL PRE-ASSESSOR TRAINING PROGRAMME

Accreditation is the *procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks.*<sup>1</sup> As a result of the magnitude of the activity of accreditation, it is important that the process employed is objective, unbiased, and competence-based.

A key input in the national accreditation programme is the authorised competent assessor. This person is utilised by the accreditation body to determine the competence of the conformity assessment body. This person may be a full-time employee of the accreditation body or part-time personnel contracted by the body to perform specific jobs. Technical experts may also be included in the assessment team to support the assessors during an assessment visit. Therefore, the effectiveness and credibility of an accreditation body depends on the competence, professionalism and integrity of its assessors and technical experts.

The accreditation programme “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.”<sup>2</sup>

The criteria for assessors are listed below.

### **A. Assessor Attributes and Their Appropriate Application**

- a. Open minded, mature and willing to consider alternative ideas
- b. Possess sound judgment, analytical skill and tenacity
- c. 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 organisation
- d. Be able to distinguish crucial or essential points from less important ones
- e. Be ethical – fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet
- f. Be diplomatic – tactful in dealing with people
- g. Be observant – actively aware of physical surroundings, activities and habits
- h. Be tenacious – persistent, focused on achieving objectives
- i. Be decisive – reaches timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis
- j. Be self-reliant – acts and functions independently while interacting effectively with others

### **B. Knowledge and Skills**

- a. Application of accreditation criteria
- b. Application of assessment and quality principles, practices and techniques
- c. Technical knowledge of Specific Laboratory Practices

The selection criteria include:

- I. **Education** – extent of technical knowledge and testing and/or calibration expertise established through actual examination, demonstration and/or documentation

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<sup>1</sup> ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004 – Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary

- II. **Working Experience** – lead assessors need to have at least 4 years of experience in a technical field with 2 of those years should be in quality management, quality assurance or quality system auditing related to laboratory activities; technical assessors require 4 years of experience in laboratory testing and/or calibration with 2 of those years should be in the assigned field.
- III. **Training** – successful completion of training course or a combination of training courses that covers the topics in ILAC G3:2020 – Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors Used by Laboratory Accreditation Schemes.
- IV. **Assessment Experience** – have either sufficient assessment experience using ISO/IEC 17025 or ISO 15189 as an assessor or have understudied five (5) assessments using ISO/IEC 17025 or ISO 15189.
- V. **Language Proficiency** – demonstrated proficiency in both spoken and written language of the accreditation body.

The accreditation body is also responsible for training and encouraging the professional development of its assessors. This process includes the initial training, ongoing training as well as professional development. The performance of the assessors and technical experts is also evaluated on an ongoing basis through formal and casual observation, feedback from team members and laboratories and reviewing the assessor reports.

Nationally however, due to the slow adoption of quality principles within the laboratory framework, the technical knowledge, skills and personal attributes need to be developed within the national resource for assessors in order to support the potential demand for laboratory accreditation as demonstrated by the applications received by TTLABS to-date (at least 3 annually). There have been demonstrated examples of the challenges in the quality of technical personnel available in Trinidad and Tobago after various technical interactions with laboratories. As a result, to be able to select and train the appropriate persons as potential assessors, a modular Pre-Assessor Training programme was developed. It comprises three (3) modules, each being five (5) days in duration. The Modules are defined below, each building on knowledge imparted from the previous session.

**MODULE I**      Philosophy of Quality, Personal Development & Understanding the requirements

**MODULE II**     Internal Auditing for Laboratories & Basic Metrology

**MODULE III**    Method Validation, Measurement Uncertainty & Proficiency Testing Interpretation

This process focuses on the technical competence required to be demonstrated by laboratories and is intended to build the knowledge base in persons working in laboratories that are not yet accredited for competence. This is in preparation for the training as required by ILAC G3:08/2020.