Guidelines for the Use of Accreditation Body Logos and for Claims of Accreditation Status

ILAC-G14:2000

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PREAMBLE

Accreditation provides formal recognition that a testing or calibration laboratory or an inspection body is capable of meeting certain standards. These are standards of quality, performance, technical expertise and competence.

Once accredited, a laboratory or inspection body may wish to make reference to its accreditation status in its test, calibration or inspection reports or certificates. Accreditation normally entitles the accredited organisation to endorse the relevant documents in the name of the accreditation body, by using the accreditation body's emblem or logo and/or by using appropriate words, in accordance with prescribed procedures or rules.

Such endorsed documents can enjoy wide acceptance nationally and also internationally through a network of formal mutual recognition agreements amongst accreditation bodies.

Accredited laboratories or inspection bodies may also wish to use the logo of the accreditation body or to claim accreditation for promotional purposes, on stationery or on proposals or quotations for testing or inspection work.

ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993 clauses 4.2.2 and 4.5(f) require accreditation bodies to "have arrangements for controlling the manner in which an accredited laboratory (or inspection body) may refer to its accredited status" and to have "requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of the accrediting body's logo and on the ways of referring to the accreditation granted".

Most accreditation bodies have prepared rules on how a laboratory or inspection body may refer to its accreditation status or how the accreditation body's emblem or logo may be used.

The various aspects which an accreditation body would normally include when developing its rules for the use of its logos by its accredited laboratories or inspection bodies, are detailed under the following headings:

1 General Guidelines

2 Logo Reproduction

3 Authorised or Approved Signatories

4 Reporting Non-accredited Results

5 Subcontracted Tests, Measurements or Inspections

6 Reporting Compliance with Specifications

7 Opinions and Interpretations

8 Calibration Certificates and Labels

9 Reports and Certificates Generated Electronically

10 Advertising and Publicity

11 Mutual Recognition Claims

12 Misuse of an Accreditation Body Logo or Accreditation Status

PURPOSE

The guidelines in this document have been developed to encourage accreditation bodies to adopt a harmonised approach for the use of their logos and for the manner in which laboratories or inspection bodies may refer to their accreditation status.

AUTHORSHIP

This publication was prepared by the ILAC Technical Accreditation Issues Committee and endorsed for publication by a decision of the ILAC General Assembly in 1999.

1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

An accreditation body may have more than one official logo for its accreditation programs, for example, for testing laboratories, for calibration laboratories, for inspection bodies, etc. These logos identify which service has been accredited (e.g. "Testing", "Calibration", "Inspection").

The use of accreditation body logos by accredited laboratories or inspection bodies is normally voluntary. Laboratories or inspection bodies, however, should issue reports or certificates bearing the logo when the tests, calibrations or inspections come under the accredited scope. Only reports bearing the logo can benefit from the recognition that mutual recognition agreements/arrangements amongst accreditation bodies bring.

Where reports and certificates contain the results of accredited tests or calibrations, the accreditation body concerned will need to specify the minimum requirements regarding the format and content of those reports or certificates, including those for the incorporation of the logo or for making reference to accreditation. Examples of formats may be included in publications issued by the accreditation body, which contain their rules for the use of logos.

The accreditation body may identify which external organisations are permitted to use its logos (e.g. accredited laboratories, accredited inspection bodies, training organisations, proficiency testing contractors, etc.) and would set the conditions governing their use. For example:

- the logo should not be used by a laboratory's or inspection body's subcontractor which is not accredited;
- the logo should not be used by applicants for accreditation;
- the logo should be used by an accredited organisation only under the name in which it holds accreditation;
- accreditation body emblems or logos should not be placed on the products or items which a laboratory or inspection body has tested or inspected.

2 LOGO REPRODUCTION

To assist accredited laboratories or inspection bodies in the use of accreditation body logos, examples of the types of logos available and the uses to which they can be put, should be published.

Information could include:

- format and proportions of the logos;
- sizes and colours of the logos;
- location of accreditation number;
- positioning of logos on reports, certificates and calibration labels and of any text to be included in association with the logos;
- availability of photographic and/or electronic copies of the logos for use by the accredited laboratories or inspection bodies.

3 AUTHORISED OR APPROVED SIGNATORIES

ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993 clause 6.4.3 (a) states that assessment reports issued by an accreditation body "should take into consideration the technical qualifications, experience and authority of the staff encountered, especially the persons responsible for the technical validity of calibration certificates, test reports, test certificates" (or inspection reports). Clause 6.6.1 (c) states "These formal accreditation documents shall permit identification, where appropriate, of the persons recognised by the accreditation body as being responsible for calibration certificates, test certificates or test reports" (or inspection reports).

An accreditation body may address these clauses by having defined requirements for authorised or approved signatories. Such requirements could include:

- whether the use of an accreditation body logo or other claim of accredited status is dependent on reports or certificates being signed by a signatory or signatories whose authorisation(s)/ approval(s) encompass(es) the scope of the accreditation;
- restriction on the use of an accreditation body logo or other claim of accredited status on reports or certificates in the absence of approved signatories.

4 REPORTING NON-ACCREDITED RESULTS

Clients of accredited laboratories or inspection bodies may request endorsed reports or certificates which contain some results of tests or calibrations or inspections for which the laboratory or inspection body is not accredited.

ISO/IEC Guide 58, clause 6.9.2 requires an accreditation body to "have a policy that defines the circumstances in which accredited laboratories (or inspection

bodies) are permitted to include, in calibration certificates, test reports or test certificates, (or inspection reports), the results of calibrations or tests (or inspections) for which accreditation is not held and the results of subcontracted calibrations or tests (or inspections)".

The policy developed by an accreditation body would need to include:

- a requirement that accreditation body logos cannot be used, and that neither reports nor certificates nor any enclosed letters (including the stationery on which they are printed) can include any reference to accreditation, if none of the results are from accredited tests, calibrations or inspections within the scope of accreditation;
- a requirement that, where tests or calibrations or inspections outside the scope of accreditation are included, they be clearly identified as such and a clear disclaimer (e.g.. "This laboratory or inspection body is not accredited for the tests, calibrations or inspections marked *");
- a requirement that every result from a test or calibration or inspection which is outside the scope of accreditation, shall be clearly identified as such.

There should be nothing in any test or inspection report or certificate or in any attachments or other material which implies, or may lead any user of the results or any interested party to believe, that the work is accredited when in fact it is not.

5 SUBCONTRACTED TESTS, CALIBRATIONS OR INSPECTIONS

An accredited laboratory or inspection body may subcontract testing or calibration or inspection work to another organisation which may or may not be accredited (including branches of its own organisation). The accredited laboratory or inspection body may then wish to include the results of the tests or calibration or inspection work it has subcontracted, in the body of its report or certificate endorsed with an accreditation body logo.

The accreditation body will need to define the circumstances under which an accredited laboratory or inspection body may include results of subcontracted tests or calibrations or inspections in its endorsed reports or certificates. These could include:

- the accredited laboratory or inspection body has taken full responsibility for the subcontracted tests or calibrations or inspections and, unless it is an accredited branch of the same organisation, has informed the client of the proposed subcontracting and has obtained prior approval;
- approval has been obtained from the subcontractor for the accredited laboratory or inspection body to report excerpts from the subcontractor's report or certificate;
- the subcontractor is itself accredited for the specific tests or calibrations or inspections concerned and the results have been included in the subcontracting laboratory's or inspection body's endorsed test report or certificate;
- the subcontractor laboratory or inspection body is not accredited for the specific tests or calibrations or inspections concerned and the results have been included in the principal laboratory's or inspection body's report or certificate, but with the requirements of Section 4 of this document being completely fulfilled (i.e. the results are clearly indicated as being outside the scope of accreditation);
- subcontracted test or calibration or inspection results are incorporated into the endorsed report or certificate and the laboratory or inspection body has noted which tests or calibrations or inspections were subcontracted;
- the subcontractor may not necessarily be accredited by the same accreditation body that has accredited the principal organisation, but the above circumstances could apply if the two accreditation bodies have a Mutual Recognition Agreement.

Where all tests or calibrations were subcontracted to an organisation which was not accredited, or the accredited subcontracting laboratory or inspection body has not done any of the work, none of the logos of the accreditation body may be used on any reports or certificates issued by the accredited subcontracting laboratory or inspection body and no stationery relating to the report or certificate may include any reference to or implication of its accreditation.

6 REPORTING COMPLIANCE WITH SPECIFICATIONS

Often items are tested or calibrated or inspected to determine compliance or otherwise with specifications. The recipients of the results may require a statement of compliance or an objective interpretation of results endorsed with a logo of the accreditation body, to be included in the report or certificate.

An accreditation body should have a policy or rules to define when and how accredited laboratories or inspection bodies may include, in endorsed reports or certificates, statements concerning compliance or noncompliance of the test or calibration or inspection items with specifications or standards.

These rules for compliance statements should fulfil the requirements of ILAC Guide G8: 1996. In cases where uncertainty is not available or required within the scope of accreditation, the accreditation body should have procedures for approving statements of compliance within endorsed reports.

7 OPINIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The clients of accredited laboratories or inspection bodies may need, in reports or certificates endorsed with a logo of the accreditation body, additional comment regarding the serviceability or suitability for specific purposes, of the items, samples, batches or consignments, or an amplification or interpretation of the results obtained.

The accreditation body will need to define requirements which allow the inclusion in endorsed reports or certificates, of expressions of opinion, interpretation or other statements.

Such statements may be included in the laboratory's or inspection body's report under such provisions as:

- Any endorsed statement of interpretation of results on an endorsed report or certificate must be based only on those results for which accreditation is specifically held and must be objective.
- Endorsement of statements of opinion should be allowed only if the accredited laboratory or inspection body is specifically accredited to issue such statements (for inspection bodies, opinions and interpretations are usually within the scope of their accreditation).
- There may be signatories specifically authorised to prepare and issue endorsed statements of interpretation or opinion.

Where such statements of opinion and interpretation are outside the scope of accreditation, the laboratory may be required to include a disclaimer in the report or certificate, close to the logo or to the expression of opinion, such as:

> "The opinions/interpretations expressed in this report are outside the scope of this laboratory's accreditation".

However, it is preferable to express opinions and interpretations, which are outside the scope of accreditation, on a separate letter which is not part of the endorsed report and which does not carry the accreditation body logo.

8 CALIBRATION CERTIFICATES AND LABELS

8.1 Calibration Certificates

To fulfil the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025, the contents of accredited calibration certificates will need to contain appropriate expressions of the uncertainty (or uncertainties) associated with the results of the calibration, along with the applicable confidence level or coverage factor. If calibration certificates are to be used by testing laboratories or ISO 9001 or ISO 9002 certified organisations to establish traceability of their measurements, they should be endorsed with the calibration logo of the accreditation body.

8.2 Calibration Labels on Instruments

Calibration labels containing a logo of the accreditation body, and which are attached to calibrated instruments, would usually need to include the following information:

- accreditation body logo;
- the name of the accredited calibration laboratory or its accreditation number;
- instrument identification;
- date of current calibration;
- date of next planned calibration;
- cross reference to the calibration certificate issued in respect of this calibration.

The accreditation body would need to restrict the use of these labels to equipment that has been calibrated by accredited calibration laboratories.

9 REPORTS AND CERTIFICATES GENERATED ELECTRONICALLY

Increasingly accredited laboratories and inspection bodies are generating and issuing reports or certificates electronically, generally within the laboratory or inspection body premises, but on occasion at outside locations such as at a head-office or a despatch office or even at client premises. Many of these reports or certificates make reference to the laboratory's or inspection body's accreditation or include a logo of the accreditation body.

An accreditation body will need to ensure that the laboratory or inspection body has effectively implemented procedures that ensure that the integrity of the reports or certificates is maintained in the above circumstances.

In addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025, the following items may need to be specified by the accreditation body, when endorsed reports are to be generated electronically.

When an endorsed report or certificate is to be generated by an accredited laboratory or inspection body from a location within the company other than that where the testing or inspection work has been undertaken or the draft prepared, the laboratory shall ensure that:

- it complies with all requirements for any endorsed reports or certificates;
- it carries (after their authorisation) the signatures or equivalent identification, facsimile signatures or typed names of the appropriate authorised or approved signatories from the originating laboratory or inspection body;
- paper quality, fonts, printing quality, etc. are such that the report may not be misread or misunderstood.

10 ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

Accredited laboratories or inspection bodies and their parent companies may wish to incorporate in publicity and/or advertising material, statements concerning their accreditation, with or without a logo of the accreditation body.

Materials may include:

- publicity and advertising material;
- brochures and organisation publications;
- technical literature;
- business reports;
- quotations or proposals for work.

The use of the logos or material implying accreditation should enhance the reputation and value of accreditation for all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the accreditation body to ensure that the general use of its logos or other accreditation claims by laboratories or inspection bodies do not misrepresent their accreditation status and do not bring the accreditation process into disrepute.

ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993, clause 7.2 (h) requires that an accredited laboratory (or inspection body) "in making reference to its accreditation status in communication media ...., complies with the requirements of the accreditation body".

The accreditation body will need to have requirements for use of its logo or other accreditation claims by its accredited clients. These requirements may include:

- the accreditation claim is related to or associated only with the testing or calibration or inspection services which are covered by the scope of accreditation, and not with any other activities in which the laboratory or inspection body or its parent organisation may be involved. In proposals or quotations, it may be necessary to distinguish tests or calibrations or inspections which are accredited from those which are not;
- an accreditation body logo or accreditation claim is not affixed to an item sample or product (or part of it) or used to imply that an item or product has been certified;
- a logo of the accreditation body or an accreditation claim is not used in any manner which gives the impression that the accreditation body accepts responsibility for test or calibration or inspection results, or for any opinion or interpretation derived from those results, or that the accreditation body approves a tested or calibrated or inspected product or item;
- where a logo of the accreditation body is printed on letterhead and/or other corporate stationery, such stationery is not used for work proposals or quotes, nor for reporting of test or calibration or inspection results outside the scope of the accreditation, nor for certifying a product or item;
- where the client organisation is also ISO 9001 or ISO 9002 certified, the certification body logo is not used for the reporting of any endorsed test or calibration of inspection results, nor for certifying a product or item.

11 MUTUAL RECOGNITION CLAIMS

Where an accreditation body has mutual recognition with one or more other accreditation bodies, its accredited laboratories or inspection bodies may, in approved words, make claim to such recognition on their reports or certificates.

The use of logos of mutual recognition partners on endorsed reports or certificates is not to be permitted by accreditation bodies unless they have specific one-to-one agreements with their partner(s) whose logos are to be used.

12 MISUSE OF AN ACCREDITATION BODY LOGO OR ACCREDITATION STATUS

Misuse of an accreditation body logo or accreditation status by anyone needs to be treated seriously. It could significantly undermine the credibility of the whole international conformity assessment process.

Clause 7.2 (a) of ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993 states "..that an accredited laboratory (or inspection body) claims that it is accredited only in respect of services for which it has been granted accreditation and which are carried out in accordance with these conditions;". Further, clause 7.2 (d) states "...does not use its accreditation in such a manner as to bring the accreditation body into disrepute and does not make any statement relevant to its accreditation which the accreditation body may consider misleading or unauthorised".

Accreditation bodies need to consider how they can apply sanctions for the misuse of accreditation body logos by laboratories or other stakeholders. They will need rules and procedures for sanctions, where misrepresentation of accreditation status is discovered. Sanctions could include suspension, withdrawal or termination of an organisation's accreditation.

In some situations, and particularly where misuse was by an organisation that is not accredited, legal sanctions under copyright or fair trading or other laws of the land may be necessary.

Clause 7.2 (e) of ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993 states "an accredited laboratory (or inspection body), upon suspension or withdrawal of its accreditation (however determined) [shall] forthwith discontinue its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and return any certificates of accreditation to the accreditation body".

Thus, accreditation bodies need procedures to ensure that accredited laboratories or inspection bodies with accreditations which have been suspended, withdrawn or terminated, discontinue immediately the use of the accreditation body logos or any reference to accreditation status in reports, certificates, promotional material, stationery etc.

However, discretion is required in cases of temporary suspension (e.g. resulting from the temporary (short annual leave or sickness) absence of a signatory) provided that no endorsed reports are being issued.

Where accreditation has been withdrawn or terminated, the laboratory or inspection body may then no longer be a client of the accreditation body. In such cases legal sanctions through copyright or fair trading laws may be necessary.

13 CONCLUSION

The integrity of accreditation as a conformity assessment tool depends on accreditation bodies and their accredited laboratories or inspection bodies taking joint responsibility for the proper use of accreditation status and of accreditation body logos and for improving the reputation and value of accreditation for the benefit of all accredited laboratories and inspection bodies, their clients and other users of test, calibration and inspection results.

The International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) is the principal international forum for the exchange of ideas and information on laboratory accreditation.

Established in the late 1970s, ILAC membership has grown rapidly and includes representatives from the world's major laboratory accreditation systems in Europe, Asia, North America, Australia and the Pacific. Countries that are developing their own laboratory accreditation systems are also welcome to participate and contribute.

ILAC operates a series of committees which investigate issues such as the harmonisation of international laboratory accreditation practices, the effectiveness of mutual recognition agreements in facilitating trade and the promotion of the aims and awareness of laboratory accreditation around the world.

There are regular meetings of individual ILAC committees as well as a major plenary meeting of all ILAC members.

The activities of ILAC affect a diverse range of areas including standardisation, accreditation, certification, testing, calibration, and regulation in both the public and private sectors.

ILAC Publications Currently Available

Information Documents (I Series)

ILAC-I1:1994	Legal Liability in Testing
ILAC-I2:1994	Testing, Quality Assurance, Certification and Accreditation
ILAC-I3:1996	The Role of Testing and Laboratory Accreditation in International Trade
ILAC-I4:1996	Guidance Documents for the Preparation of Laboratory Quality Manuals

Guidance Documents (G Series)

ILAC-G2:1994	Traceability of Measurement
ILAC-G3:1994	Guidelines for Training Courses for Assessors
ILAC-G4:1994	Guidelines on Scopes of Accreditation
ILAC-G7:1996	Accreditation Requirements and Operating Criteria for Horseracing Laboratories
ILAC-G8:1996	Guidelines on Assessment and Reporting of Compliance with Specification
ILAC-G9:1996	Guidelines for the Selection and Use of Certified Reference Materials
ILAC-G10:1996	Harmonised Procedures for Surveillance & Reassessment of Accredited Laboratories
ILAC-G11:1998	Guidelines on Assessor Qualification and Competence
ILAC-G12:2000	Guidelines for the Requirements for the Competence of Reference Material Producers
ILAC-G13:2000	Guidelines for the Requirements for the Competence of Providers of Proficiency Testing Schemes
ILAC-G14:2000	Guidelines for the Use of Accreditation Body Logos and for Claims of Accreditation Status
ILAC-G15:2001	Guidance for Accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025

Secretariat Documents (S Series)

ILAC-S1:2000	Guidelines for the Preparation, Layout and Numbering of ILAC Publications
ILAC-S2:1998	Rules

Procedural Documents (P Series)

ILAC-P1:2000	ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Requirements for Evaluation of Accreditation Bodies
ILAC-P2: 2000	ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Procedures for the Evaluation of Regional Cooperation Bodies for the Purpose of Recognition