

# International Accreditation cooperation/forum

## About APAC

### ABOUT APAC

The Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) was established on 1 January 2019 by the amalgamation of two former regional accreditation cooperation – the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) and the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).

APAC is the regional accreditation cooperation for the Asia Pacific region and is recognised by the International Accreditation Forum ([IAF](#)) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation ([ILAC](#)).

### Role of APAC

APAC's primary role is to manage and expand a mutual recognition arrangement (MRA) among accreditation bodies in the Asia Pacific region. The MRA facilitates the acceptance of conformity assessment results (e.g. test reports, test certificates, inspection reports, and certification) across the region and with other regions around the world. Conformity assessment results that are produced by conformity assessment bodies (CABs) that have been accredited by one APAC MRA signatory are accepted by all the other APAC MRA signatories. This mutual recognition and acceptance of conformity assessment results reduces the need to undertake duplicate testing, inspection or certification, thus saving time and money, increasing economic efficiency and facilitating international trade.

APAC's [members](#) include accreditation bodies, accreditation focal points and other organisations that have an interest in accredited conformity assessment results.

APAC is recognized by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as one of four [APEC Specialist Regional Bodies](#) (SRBs) that support the work of the APEC Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance.

## History of APLAC

APLAC was initiated in 1992 as a forum for laboratory accreditation bodies in the Asia Pacific region. The APLAC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), formally establishing APLAC, was signed in April 1996 by the founding members.

The inaugural signing of the APLAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) occurred on 19 November 1997, with 7 accreditation bodies signing the MRA for testing and calibration. The MRA was extended in November 2003 to include inspection, and in April 2007 to refer specifically to ISO 15189 (the international standard applied to medical laboratories) that had previously been included under the “testing” scope of the MRA. The inaugural signing of the extended APLAC MRA to include accreditation of reference material producers (RMPs) took place in December 2007. The inaugural signing of the extended APLAC MRA to include accreditation of proficiency testing providers (PTPs) took place in June 2014. At the end of 2018, APLAC had 38 accreditation bodies that were MRA signatories.

## History of PAC

PAC was initiated in 1996, and approved the initial version of its Multilateral Accreditation Arrangement (MLA) in 1997. In 1998 the first 6 accreditation bodies signed the MLA for the scope of accredited quality management systems (QMS) certification. Over the following years other scopes were added such as other types of management system certification (e.g. environmental management systems, food safety management systems), product certification, person certification and greenhouse gas validation and verification. At the end of 2018 PAC had 26 accreditation bodies that were MLA signatories.

## APAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA)

One of the primary roles of APAC is to extend the APAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) and harmonise accreditation practices in the region. Currently 67 of the 77 members of APAC are MRA signatories and are APAC Full Members.

APAC Associate Members are not APAC MRA signatories and the accreditation services that they provide are not recognised under the APAC MRA because Associate Members have not been peer evaluated. Likewise, the accreditation services of APAC members that have had their APAC MRA signatory status suspended are also not recognised under the APAC MRA.

As of September 2022, APAC Full Members have accredited:

- 66,639 conformity assessment bodies with the scopes of calibration and testing (ISO/IEC 17025), medical testing (ISO 15189), inspection (ISO/IEC 17020), reference materials (ISO 17024), proficiency testing (ISO/IEC 17043) and bio banking (ISO 23887); and
- 5,764 conformity assessment bodies with the scopes of product certification (ISO/IEC 17065), management system certification (ISO/IEC 17021-1), certification of persons (ISO/IEC 17024), and validation and verification (ISO/IEC 17029 and/or 14065).

The accredited conformity assessment results of these conformity assessment bodies are accepted across the Asia Pacific region, and internationally.

For an update to list of the APAC MRA signatories and their recognized accreditation scopes under the APAC MRA, please see [APAC FGOV-011 Register of Members and Affiliates](#).

The APAC MRA is the combination of the previous APLAC MRA that was originally signed in 1997 and the PAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangement signed in 1998.

Signatories of the APAC MRA are APAC Full Members. Because APAC is a recognized regional cooperation by the [International Accreditation Forum](#) (IAF) and the [International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation](#) (ILAC), most APAC MRA signatories are also recognized under the international IAF Multilateral Arrangement (MLA) and ILAC MRA. This extends the mutual recognition of accredited conformity assessment results beyond the Asia Pacific to encompass most parts of the world.

The APAC MRA forms a regional network of conformity assessment bodies (e.g. laboratories, inspection bodies, certification bodies etc.) which are accredited by accreditation bodies that have been peer-evaluated and recognized as being competent by their peers in other economies. This network facilitates the acceptance of conformity assessment results across the region, thus contributing to the facilitation of trade and the free-trade goal of “tested/inspected/certified once, accepted everywhere”.

The APAC MRA is based on the results of an intensive evaluation of each accreditation body done in accordance with procedures detailed in the relevant APAC publications. Each APAC MRA signatory has demonstrated conformity with the international standard for accreditation

bodies, ISO/IEC 17011, and its accredited facilities are in conformity with one or more of the following conformity assessment body standards:

- Bio banking ISO 20387
- Calibration ISO/IEC 17020
- Certification – Management systems ISO/IEC 17021-1
  - Anti-bribery management systems (ABMS)
  - Business continuity management systems (BCMS)
  - Energy management systems (EnMS)
  - Environmental management systems (EMS)
  - Feed additives and premixtures quality system (FAMI-QS)
  - Food safety management systems (FSMS)
  - Food Safety system Certification 22000 (FSSC 22000)
  - Information security management systems (ISMS)
  - Medical device quality management systems (MDQMS)
  - Occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS)
  - Quality management systems (QMS)
- Certification – Persons ISO/IEC 17024
  - IPC Management System Auditors
- Certification – Products, processes and services ISO/IEC 17060
  - GLOBALG.A.P.
- Inspection ISO/IEC 17020
- Medical testing ISO 15189
- Proficiency testing ISO/IEC 17043
- Reference materials production ISO/IEC 17034
- Testing ISO/IEC 17020
- Validation and verification ISO/IEC 17029
  - Environmental information ISO 14600:2020
- Validation and verification – Greenhouse gases ISO 14600:2013
  - ICAO-CORSIA

A re-evaluation of each APAC MRA signatory is done at a maximum of 4-yearly intervals by a team of trained APAC peer-evaluators.

Obligations of APAC MRA signatories include:

1. Recognition, within its own scope of recognition the accreditation of a conformity assessment body by other signatories as being equivalent to an accreditation by its own organization.
2. Acceptance, for its own purposes, of conformity assessment results that come from conformity assessment bodies accredited by other signatories on the same basis as it accepts conformity assessment results issued by its own accredited conformity assessment bodies.

۳. Recommending and promoting the acceptance by users of results issued by organizations accredited by other signatories in its economy of accredited conformity assessment

## APAC Publications

<https://www.apac-accreditation.org/publications/>

## About IAF

The **International Accreditation Forum (IAF)** is a worldwide association of accreditation bodies and other bodies interested in conformity assessment in the fields of management systems, products, processes, services, personnel, validation and verification and other similar programmes of conformity assessment.

Our primary function is to develop a single worldwide program of conformity assessment which reduces risk for businesses and their customers by assuring them that accredited certificates and validation and verification statements may be relied upon.

## IAF Charter

- The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) is an international association of organizations that have agreed to work together on a worldwide basis to achieve common trade facilitation objectives. We are a major worldwide forum for developing principles and practices for the conduct of conformity assessment that will deliver the confidence needed for market acceptance. We act through the accreditation of those bodies that conduct certification of management systems, products, processes, services and personnel, and validation and verification.
- We promote worldwide acceptance of certificates of conformity and validation and verification statements issued by certification and validation/verification bodies accredited by Accreditation Body Members of IAF, and seek to add value for all stakeholders through what we do and through our programs.
- We bring together, on a worldwide basis, partner accreditation bodies and representatives of stakeholder groups that seek to facilitate global trade through the acceptance of accredited certificates of conformity and validation and verification statements.
- We develop and/or recognize appropriate processes and practices for the conduct of conformity assessment worldwide and ensure their universal application by IAF Accreditation Body Members and their accredited certification and validation/verification bodies.

- We consult widely with stakeholders in developing our programs and we work to deliver the best possible standard of conformity assessment in order to provide our stakeholders with a value-added outcome.
- We influence world trade through linking and working with other key international organizations and industry groups.

Original approved by members of IAF November 2000.

## **Role of IAF**

- Ensure that its Accreditation Body Members only accredit bodies that are competent to do the work they undertake and are not subject to conflicts of interest.
- Maintaining the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) among Accreditation Body Member signatories, which reduces risk to businesses and their customers by ensuring that an accredited certificate or validation/verification statement may be relied upon anywhere in the world.
- Working to find the most effective way of achieving a single system that will allow companies with an accredited conformity assessment certificate or validation/verification statement in one part of the world to have that certificate or validation/verification statement recognised elsewhere in the world.
- Eliminating the need for suppliers of products or services to be certified in each country where they sell their products or services. Certified once – accepted everywhere.
- Promoting accreditation as an effective mechanism for providing confidence in goods and services, which is essential to global trade facilitation.

## **IAF MLA Benefits**

The purpose of the IAF MLA is to ensure mutual recognition of accredited certification and validation/verification statements between signatories to the MLA, and subsequently acceptance of accredited certification and validation/verification statements in many markets based on one accreditation.

## **For Government**

The IAF MLA provides governments with a credible and robust framework on which to further develop and enhance government-to-government bilateral and multilateral international trade agreements. The long-term aim is the fully accepted use and recognition, by both public and private industries, of accredited conformity assessment, including certificates and validation/verification statements from other countries. In this way, the free-trade goal of “accredited once, accepted everywhere” can be realized.

## **For Regulators**

The IAF MLA represents an internationally recognised ‘stamp of approval’ to demonstrate compliance against agreed standards and requirements. Risk is consequently minimised, as decisions are based on reliable conformity assessment results. Many specifiers, such as government agencies, have recognised the importance of credible accreditation programs that are developed against internationally recognised standards. Accreditation and the IAF MLA help regulators meet their own legislated responsibilities by providing a globally recognised system to accept accredited certification, validation and verification.

## **For Business**

The IAF MLA provides businesses that are procuring products and services with greater confidence in their consistency of quality. Businesses can therefore select suppliers from further afield in the knowledge that they will receive products and services that conform to recognised standards.

## **For Manufacturers**

Having products assessed and certified as conforming to a particular standard allows manufacturers and service providers to distinguish themselves from less reputable suppliers, thereby creating a competitive advantage.

The IAF MLA ensures that standards, specifications and conformity assessment methods are the same, allowing one certificate or validation/verification statement to be recognised around the world. This lowers the cost of accredited certification, and validation and verification, and reduces the risk of products or services being rejected by international trading partners.

## **For Consumers**

Consumer confidence can be gained from goods or services that bear a mark or carry a certificate of conformity. The IAF MLA ensures that such goods and services placed on the market, from whichever country of origin, meet standards of quality and safety, or environmental and social responsibility.

## **About IAF MLA**

Accreditation Body and Regional Accreditation Group Members of IAF are admitted to the IAF MLA only after a stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation

team which is charged to ensure that the applicant complies fully with both international standards and IAF requirements. Once an accreditation body is a signatory of the IAF MLA, it is required to recognise certificates and validation and verification statements issued by conformity assessment bodies accredited by all other signatories of the IAF MLA, with the appropriate scope.

The IAF MLA consists of a five level arrangement, with levels 1 and 2 constituting main scopes and levels 3 and 4 constituting sub-scopes. More information on the structure of the MLA can be found in [IAF PL 1: Policies and Procedures on the IAF MLA Structure and for Expansion of the Scope of the IAF MLA](#), and the current status of the IAF MLA is available in [IAF MLA Status](#).

## **Purpose of the IAF MLA**

The purpose of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) is to ensure mutual recognition of accredited certification and validation/verification statements between signatories to the MLA, and subsequently acceptance of accredited certification and validation/verification statements in many markets based on one accreditation.

Accreditations granted by IAF MLA signatories are recognised worldwide based on their equivalent accreditation programs, therefore reducing costs and adding value to businesses and consumers.

Accreditation Body Members of IAF are admitted to the MLA only after a stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team.

As a strategic objective, IAF is committed to increasing the transparency of the peer evaluation process and its outcomes. IAF and its Accreditation Body Members invest significant effort and resources to maintain the integrity and consistency of the MLA through the peer evaluation process.

The IAF MLA Annual Report sets out the detailed activities that are carried out as part of the peer evaluation process, to ensure that regulators, specifiers, and businesses can have confidence in the Arrangement.

## **The IAF MLA Mark**

The IAF MLA Mark can be used by accreditation bodies to demonstrate their status as a signatory to the IAF MLA. Certification and validation/verification bodies accredited by IAF MLA signatories can also use the IAF MLA Mark in combination with the accreditation symbol on their certificates or statements.

Businesses seeking certification or validation/verification will be able to see at a glance if the certification or validation/verification body issuing the certificate or statement is



accredited by an IAF MLA signatory. The certification or validation/verification body must include an indication as to which activity the accreditation is related.

Use of the MLA Mark by accreditation bodies and conformity assessment bodies is not mandatory and therefore certificates and statements, from accredited conformity assessment bodies, may be seen with or without the MLA Mark.

You can see IAFMLA members through <https://iaf.nu/en/accreditation-bodies/>

## Recognised Regions

<https://iaf.nu/en/recognised-regions/>

## IAF Documents

<https://iaf.nu/en/iaf-documents-categories/>

# » **ABOUT ILAC**

ILAC is the international organisation for accreditation bodies operating in accordance with ISO/IEC 17011 and involved in the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies including calibration laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17025), testing laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17025), medical testing laboratories (using ISO 15189), inspection bodies (using ISO/IEC 17020), proficiency testing providers (using ISO/IEC 17043) and reference material producers (using ISO 17044).

Accreditation is the independent evaluation of conformity assessment bodies against recognised standards to carry out specific activities to ensure their impartiality and competence. Through the application of national and international standards, government, procurers and consumers can have confidence in the calibration and test results, inspection reports and certifications provided.

Accreditation bodies are established in many economies with the primary purpose of ensuring that conformity assessment bodies are subject to oversight by an authoritative body. Accreditation bodies, that have been peer evaluated as competent, sign regional and international arrangements to demonstrate their competence. These accreditation bodies then assess and accredit conformity assessment bodies to the relevant standards.

The arrangements support the provision of local or national services, such as providing **safe food and clean drinking water**, providing **energy**, delivering **health and social care** or maintaining an unpolluted environment. In addition, the arrangements enhance the acceptance of products and services across national borders, thereby creating a framework to support **international trade** through the removal of technical barriers.

The international arrangements are managed by ILAC in the fields of calibration, testing, medical testing, inspection, proficiency testing providers and reference material producers accreditation and **IAF** in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar

programmes of conformity assessment. Both organisations, ILAC and IAF, work together and coordinate their efforts to enhance the accreditation and the conformity assessment worldwide.

The regional arrangements are managed by the recognised regional co-operation bodies that work in harmony with ILAC and IAF. The recognised regional co-operations are also represented on the ILAC and IAF Executive Committees. ILAC works closely with the regional co-operation bodies involved in accreditation, notably [EA](#) in Europe, [APAC](#) in the Asia-Pacific, [IAAC](#) in the Americas, [AFRAC](#) in Africa, [SADCA](#) in Southern Africa, and [ARAC](#) in the Arab region.

## ILAC History

ILAC first started as a conference, which was held on 24-28 October 1977 in Copenhagen, Denmark with the aim of developing international cooperation for facilitating trade by promotion of the acceptance of accredited test and calibration results.

In 1996, ILAC became a formal cooperation with a charter to establish a network of mutual recognition agreements among accreditation bodies.

In 2000, the 36 ILAC Full Members consisting of laboratory accreditation bodies from 28 economies worldwide, signed the [ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement \(ILAC MRA\)](#) in Washington DC, to promote the acceptance of technical test and calibration data for exported goods. The ILAC MRA for calibration and testing laboratories came into effect on 31 January 2001.

The ILAC MRA was then extended in October 2012 to include the accreditation of inspection bodies. In May 2019 it was further extended to include the accreditation of proficiency testing providers and in May 2020 for the accreditation of reference material producers.

## » ILAC MRA AND SIGNATORIES

The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (ILAC MRA) provides significant technical underpinning to the calibration, testing, medical testing and inspection results, provision of proficiency testing programs and production of the reference materials of the accredited conformity assessment bodies that in turn delivers confidence in the acceptance of services and results.

The ILAC MRA supports the provision of local or national services, such as providing [safe food and clean drinking water](#), providing [energy](#), delivering [health and social care](#) or maintaining an unpolluted environment.

In addition, the ILAC MRA enhances the acceptance of products across national borders. By removing the need for additional calibration, testing, medical testing and/or inspection of imports and exports, technical barriers to trade are reduced. In this way the ILAC MRA promotes [international trade](#) and the free-trade goal of “accredited once, accepted everywhere” can be realized.

## How it works

The ILAC MRA links the existing regional MRAs/MLAs of the [Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies](#). For the purposes of the ILAC MRA, and based on ILAC’s evaluation and recognition of the regional MRAs/MLAs, ILAC delegates authority to its Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies for the evaluation, surveillance, re-evaluation and associated decision making relating to the signatory status of the accreditation bodies that are ILAC Full Members (ILAC MRA signatories).

The accreditation bodies that are signatories to the ILAC MRA have been peer evaluated in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 to demonstrate their competence. The [ILAC](#)

[MRA Signatory Search](#) provides a current list of all accreditation bodies that are signatories to the ILAC MRA, including their contact details, the scope of their recognition and the initial date of signing the ILAC MRA. This list of ILAC MRA signatories can be printed by clicking on the red printer button on the signatory search page. Alternatively, the PDF version of the [list of ILAC MRA signatories](#) is also available for download.

The ILAC MRA signatories then assess and accredit conformity assessment bodies according to the relevant international standards including calibration laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17025), testing laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17020), medical testing laboratories (using ISO 15189), inspection bodies (using ISO/IEC 17021), proficiency testing providers (using ISO/IEC 17043) and reference material producers (using ISO 17044). The ILAC MRA signatories agree to accept the results of each other's [accredited conformity assessment bodies](#) under the ILAC MRA. Hence, the results from the conformity assessment bodies accredited by the ILAC MRA signatories are able to be recognised internationally. In many cases, a link to the accreditation body's online directory of accredited facilities is also provided in the ILAC MRA Signatory Search.

Using the signatory search and the accredited facilities directories, regulators and consumers can locate laboratories, inspection bodies, proficiency testing providers or reference material producers that are accredited for the specific calibrations, tests, inspections, provision of proficiency testing programs or production of reference material required, as well as the contact details of these facilities, thereby ensuring the service and results will be accepted under the ILAC MRA. Organisations can also host the ILAC MRA signatory search on their website by [copying the code](#).

The Invalid download ID. provides information on the activities carried out as part of the peer evaluation process each year to ensure that regulators and consumers of laboratory and inspection data, proficiency testing programs and reference materials are able to maintain confidence in the services and results produced under the ILAC MRA.

## » ILAC MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

- [Regional Cooperation Bodies](#)
- [Full Members \(ILAC MRA Signatories\)](#)
- [Associates](#)
- [Stakeholders](#)

### Regional Cooperation Bodies

Formally established regional accreditation cooperations having objectives similar to and compatible with ILAC, which are committed to the obligations of the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement and which consist of formally nominated representatives of the accreditation interests from at least four economies. Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies are those whose regional Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA/MLA) have been successfully peer-evaluated by ILAC.

### Full Members (ILAC MRA Signatories)

Accreditation bodies that meet the requirements for Associates (below) and have also been accepted as signatories to the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement. Each accreditation body that is a signatory to the Arrangement agrees to abide by its terms and conditions and by the ILAC evaluation procedures. To do this, the signatory must:

- Maintain conformance with ISO/IEC 17011, related ILAC guidance documents, and a few, but important, supplementary requirements, and
- Ensure that all its accredited laboratories, inspection bodies and proficiency testing providers comply with ISO/IEC 17025 or ISO 15189 (for medical testing laboratories) or ISO/IEC 17026 or ISO/IEC 17043 and related ILAC documents.

These signatories have, in turn, been peer-reviewed and shown to meet ILAC's criteria for competence. A brochure, "The route to signing the IAF or ILAC Arrangements", describing the process involved in becoming a signatory to the ILAC MRA is available from [here](#).

## Associates

Accreditation bodies that, while not yet signatories to the ILAC Arrangement:

- operate accreditation schemes for testing laboratories, calibration laboratories, inspection bodies, and/or other services as decided from time to time by the ILAC General Assembly.
- can provide evidence that they are operational and committed to comply with:
  - the requirements set out in relevant standards established by appropriate international standards writing bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electro technical Commission (IEC) and ILAC application documents; and
  - the obligations of the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement;
- are recognised in their economy as offering an accreditation service;

A brochure, "The route to signing the IAF or ILAC Arrangements", describing the process involved in becoming a signatory to the ILAC MRA is available from [here](#).

## Stakeholders

Representative international, regional and national organizations having an interest in the work of ILAC and include bodies such as associations of laboratories, associations of laboratory practitioners, inspection body associations, purchasing organisations, regulatory authorities, consumer associations and trade organisations.

Please [contact the ILAC Secretariat](#) for all enquiries on ILAC membership.

## » ***ILAC MEMBERS BY CATEGORY***

<https://ilac.org/ilac-membership/members-by-category/>

## » ***ILAC PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES***

<https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/>