

Procedure for conducting remote assessments

1. Scope:

This document prescribes the procedure in relation to conducting remote assessments to supplement the traditional on-site assessment activities when appropriate. This procedure is applicable for all accreditation schemes operated by SLAB.

2. Responsibility

Governing Council
 Director/CEO
 Technical manager
 Authorized Officer
 Conformity Assessment Body

3. Reference (current versions unless specified):

ISO 17011: Conformity assessment –Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies

ISO 19011: Guidelines for auditing management system

IAF ID 12: Principles on Remote Assessment

IAF ID 3: Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations

IAF MD 4: Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes

APAC TEC0-001: Guidance on Remote Assessments by Accreditation Bodies

AC-RG(P)-20: SLAB policy on management of extraordinary events or circumstances affecting SLAB accredited bodies and their customers

XX- RG(P)-02: Rules and procedures for accreditation schemes

NOTE: The code ‘XX’ in the reference documents denotes the code of relevant accreditation scheme.

4. Definitions:

4.1 Remote assessment: assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a conformity assessment body using electronic means

4.2 Conformity Assessment Body (CAB): Body that performs conformity assessment activities and that can be the object of accreditation

4.3 Virtual site: Online environment allowing persons from different physical locations to execute processes.

4.4 Electronic documented information: All documented information used in demonstrating conformity to the relevant standard and/or requirements maintained and available via electronic means from any site or location, regardless of where the work is completed.

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5 Procedure:

5.1 Remote assessments can be used at SLAB's discretion including for but not limited to the following circumstances:

- Pre-assessments
- Initial assessments
 - a) if the pre-assessment conducted on-site
 - b) conduct partly remote and partly on-site assessment (with at least one assessment team member present on-site)
- When a SLAB-accredited CAB is seeking scope extension
- Surveillance assessments, follow-up assessments, and verification assessments,
- Approval of Authorized Signatories and changes to management system of the CAB,
- Instances that assessments could not be completed on-site and other extraordinary situations.
- Witnessing a CAB conducting on-site/remote audits/tests/calibrations /inspections/validations/verifications.
- Office assessment of another location of a Certification Body/ Validation/Verification Body/Inspection Body.
- Complaint and appeal investigation.
- CAB has changed location and/or address.
- When timing of the assessment does not support the travel, logistics required to conduct the assessment on site.
- An activity planned for the on-site assessment could not be completed and extending the on-site assessment is not the best solution due to unavoidable circumstances.
- Unavoidable changes in scheduling for the SLAB assessment team and/or the CAB (e.g., illness, travel challenges or restrictions).
- An on-site assessment is not required for the relevant standard or scheme
- The number of sites/Sample Collection Centers to be assessed is difficult for the SLAB to completely fulfill within its timeframe due to unavoidable circumstances.
- The CAB has systematic implementation of its management system virtually, where records, data, etc. can be reviewed at any site, despite where the work is being performed.
- Special situations determined by the Technical Manager in consultation with Director/CEO.

5.2 Remote assessments cannot be used for the following circumstances:

- Objectives of the assessment could not be achieved via a remote assessment.
- Remote assessments are not allowed for the standard or scheme.
- Another Accreditation Body is conducting an assessment on SLAB's behalf.
- When the CAB has a history of nonconformance at the location being assessed.
- When the assessment team is unable to review the information that cannot be shared remotely (i.e. due to confidentiality or access issues), an on-site assessment shall be arranged.
- Due to information security and data protection measures of CABs
- When no on-site assessment has taken place for consecutive two assessments.

5.3 Eligibility Requirements to Support Remote Assessment:

- Whether there is a conflict of interest with the parties being assessed remotely.
- Pre-defined records and documentation to be available during remote assessment.
- The assessment plan for the remote assessment including desired scope for review
- The CAB maintains readily accessible electronic documented information.
- The CAB has demonstrated conformity through ongoing SLAB on-site assessments.

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- The CAB has virtual meeting capabilities, including audio (and video when used), and resources (on-site IT, personnel, and tools).
- The CAB and the SLAB assessment team can competently support the remote assessment (e.g., competent to navigate an online meeting, remote personnel are competent to participate).
- The CAB and SLAB can manage confidentiality and impartiality during the remote assessment
- The CAB has history of demonstrated performance, including efficient support of SLAB accreditation activities
- The CAB and the SLAB assessment team can support any differences in time zones.
- The CAB and the SLAB assessment team can support the language of the assessment (may include use of translator).
- The CAB and SLAB have a contingency plan for completing the assessment if the virtual meeting system does not support the assessment activities.

5.4 The online platform used during assessments shall be hosted by the CAB.

- Determining the platform (i.e., Go-To-Meeting, WebEx, Microsoft teams, Zoom, etc.) for hosting the assessment, to be agreed upon between the SLAB and the CAB (including information security and data protection measures and the respective local regulations)
- The online platform should be tested with the SLAB assessment team prior to the assessment.
- For confidentiality purposes, a unique and dedicated meeting needs to be scheduled for SLAB's opening and closing meetings during witness assessments, preferably hosted by the Certification Body/ Validation Verification Body/Inspection Body/Laboratory.
- Granting security and/or profile access to the Assessment team
- Encouraging and considering the use of web-cams, cameras, etc. when physical evaluation of an event is desired or necessary
- SLAB can provide the online platform when the CAB's efforts to host require an alternate.

5.5 Remote assessments may take more time than if SLAB was on site and may be a mix of onsite and off-site assessment activity depending on the assessment objectives.

5.6 Remote assessing issues to be taken under consideration by the assessment team members:

- Preparation needs to ensure that interviews are punctual
- The room to be used for the interview is suitable.
- Become familiar with the communication equipment/software/app.
- Beware of weak or unstable internet connection. (Assessor and client should be prepared to use telephone if internet connection is not stable)
- Considerations regarding usage of cameras and video equipment that could be banned due to security issues. (Assessor must be sure beforehand that the client will agree to use video image capturing technologies).

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5.7. Remote Assessment Process:

5.7.1 When SLAB has determined that a remote assessment activity can be completed, the remote assessment process follows the SLAB on-site assessment procedures as defined in relevant Rules and Procedures for accreditation (XX-RG(P)-02). Assessment findings and reports will be e-mailed to CAB for their acceptance at the end of the assessment and reply mail will be considered as agreement for the assessment findings.

5.7.2 If at any time during the remote assessment activity SLAB's assessment team determines the assessment objectives cannot be met, the remote assessment activity will be terminated and an on-site assessment is scheduled. The decision for termination and relevant recommendations will shall be indicated in the assessment report and communicated the CAB and SLAB.

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