

July 22, 2002

Memorandum To: A2LA Assessors

From: Teresa C. Adams, Operations Manager

Re: Terminology When Tracking Laboratories

During the last Assessor Conclave, clarification was requested for the various terms and numbers that A2LA assigns to each laboratory within our system. Below is a list of those terms with a brief definition of what they are and how they are used.

MASTER CODE: Is a unique number that is assigned to every entry within A2LA's Master Database. This number is associated with the particular person or entity to whom it was assigned throughout all future interactions with A2LA. It is not dependent upon an application for accreditation, as a "Master Code" is attributed to every person or organization with whom A2LA has had contact for any reason for ease of tracking within our database. Nor is the "Master Code" dependent upon the status of any applicant or accredited laboratory within our system. I.e., it does not change with each assessment or annual review that a laboratory may undergo. Given the number of entities within A2LA's Master Database and the history of when it was first established, the Master Code may be anywhere from three to six digits. Previously, the term "Lab Code" had been used, but as this introduced some confusion when attributed to assessors, government representatives, etc., we have since revised our terminology to refer to "Master Code" instead. "Lab Code" may still appear on documentation issued to you as we complete the internal transition to "Master Code"

CERT NO: Is a unique number assigned to each individual Certificate and its related Scope of Accreditation. By definition, these are only assigned to applicant or accredited laboratories. Each Cert No. is connected to a specific field of testing/calibration for which the laboratory is seeking accreditation or for which they are currently accredited. Therefore, it is common for a single laboratory (or a single Master Code) to have multiple Cert Nos connected with it if they are seeking (re)accreditation for multiple fields. Each unique Cert No. appears on the Certificate of Accreditation and also on its associated Scope of Accreditation. Each Cert No is in the format XXXX.YY where "XXXX" is a unique number and "YY" is a two digit extension to indicate how many fields a particular laboratory has. For example, a single laboratory accredited for both Mechanical and Chemical testing may be assigned Cert Nos. 2067.01 and 2067.02. By the same token, two separate laboratories accredited for one field each, but as a branch system, may be assigned the Cert Nos. 2181.01 and 2181.02 to make their affiliation with one another apparent. As a rule, the Cert No. for a laboratory does not change, unless their accredited/enrolled status with us changes. For example, if a laboratory chooses to become a 'branch lab' of another accredited/enrolled laboratory, their Cert No would be changed to reflect the branch status.

ASSESSMENT ID: Is a unique number assigned to each on-site assessment that an applicant or enrolled laboratory undergoes. An Assessment ID may be associated with an initial assessment, a renewal assessment, a surveillance assessment, a follow-up assessment (e.g., for the purpose of confirming resolution of deficiencies cited during an initial or renewal assessment), an interim

assessment (e.g., for the purpose of including additional tests on a laboratory's Scope of Accreditation), a 'special' assessment (e.g., for the purpose of investigating concerns that may arise about a laboratory's operations) or a pre-assessment. The purpose of the assessment is described in a letter to the laboratory and a separate letter to the assessor, formally assigning the assessment. These assignment letters should always contain at least the Master Code, the Assessment ID and an indication of the type of assessment associated with that ID. The only time an Assessment ID would potentially not be provided up-front is in the case of a pre-assessment. Most of the time, A2LA is not aware that a laboratory will ultimately undergo a pre-assessment. This is typically a decision made between the lab and assessor. If the decision is made for a pre-assessment to be conducted, the assessor must contact A2LA *before* performing or formally converting to a pre-assessment, so that a separate Assessment ID may be assigned for the assessor's use on any forms or documents related to the pre-assessment.

REVIEW ID: Is a unique number assigned to each Annual Review that an accredited laboratory undergoes. The Annual Review occurs at the mid-point of a laboratory's two-year accreditation term and may consist simply of a submission of documentation to A2LA for review or it may also involve an on-site surveillance assessment, which would then have a separate Assessment ID assigned to it. The Review ID tracks the progress and completion of a laboratory's Annual Review, whether or not an on-site surveillance assessment is associated with it.

Given these definitions, it is entirely possible for an assessor assignment letter to include a unique number for each one of these. For example, if an assessor is assigned to perform the surveillance assessment of a laboratory at the mid-point of their initial accreditation term, their assignment letter would include the Master Code, the associated Cert No(s), the Assessment ID associated with the surveillance assessment, and the Review ID associated with the laboratory's first Annual Review. Assessor reports typically need only reference the Master Code and Assessment ID. If these two numbers are presented accurately, A2LA staff can correlate them and the final assessor reports with the appropriate lab action within the database.

If, at any time, the meaning of these various numbers is unclear to you as presented in an assignment letter, do not hesitate to contact the Laboratory Services Officer responsible for that particular laboratory. Most often, these various numbers appear automatically on the letters generated by staff from the database. We are making every effort to ensure that the terminology is consistent and standard. However, do not hesitate to notify us if you see any documents, letters, etc. generated after August 31, 2002 that use an inconsistent term for any of these items.