

2005 ASSESSOR CONCLAVE

ASSESSOR COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Saturday, March 12th 2005, 4:00 P.M.

1) Welcome and Rules of Procedure

New assessors were welcomed by Chair Bob Holcombe and the Assessor Committee meeting was called to order.

2) Election of Vice Chair for 2006

Assessors were informed that Ray Schiltz will serve as Assessor Committee Chair for 2006.

Motion: Dennis McCully to serve as Vice Chair. Unanimous. Motion carried.

3) Assessor Issues

- Clarification of the A2LA/NACLA interaction:

In response to a request for clarification of the A2LA/NACLA interaction, PUnger reiterated that we voluntarily withdrew from the NACLA MRA due to NACLA's failure to enforce upon PRI (a fellow NACLA signatory) the obligation to recognize and promote the acceptance of lab data from other MRA signatories in response to inquiries. Two labs had made this request of PRI within the last year. PRI not only refused to write a letter recognizing A2LA as equivalent, but they also claimed that A2LA's assessments are not "technical" and so are different from those performed by PRI.

The NACLA Board established a working group to decide whether the MRA should be revised to remove the obligation to "promote" other signatories. However, NACLA decided to keep the MRA as it was written and, consequently, asked PRI to demonstrate that it has upheld the obligations of the MRA. PRI's response to this request was due three months ago, but has not been received yet. This situation raises concerns regarding NACLA's complaint-handling procedure, since it did not present

the issue before the NACLA Recognition Committee with A2LA and PRI present, in order to discuss possible sanctions and actions.

NACLA, as an ILAC stakeholder, has also approached ILAC for verification of whether or not it must recognize ILAC MRA signatories. The ILAC response is expected to reiterate that ILAC stakeholders must recognize and promote acceptance of ILAC MRA signatories. However, the stakeholder member responsibilities of NACLA do not extend to accreditation body (AB) members of NACLA unless those ABs are also stakeholders of ILAC. Assessors were informed that A2LA has approached various specifiers and regulators to ensure that A2LA accreditation will still be accepted even though we are no longer signatories to the NACLA MRA.

- Substantial Failure Rates in Calibration Proficiency Testing

It was pointed out that assessors are noticing substantial failure rates among calibration laboratories participating in proficiency testing. It is generally considered statistically acceptable to see an overall failure rate of 5%. However, we are currently seeing a failure rate closer to 30%. The biggest type of error noted and attributed to this failure rate is overly optimistic measurement uncertainties. It was suggested that A2LA closely monitor these laboratories to ensure that appropriate corrective actions are taken.

- Effective Dates for Revised A2LA Policies

An issue was brought forward regarding unclear implementation dates on revised A2LA policies and requirements. This causes problems for assessors that are already in the process of preparing for an assessment (utilizing documents in effect when the lab applied) when they receive notification of an update to a relevant policy or requirement. It was suggested that the date of a laboratory's application for new or renewal accreditation set the date for determining which assessment documents, policies and procedures are to be utilized. It was also suggested that a longer implementation timeframe be established (e.g., 3-6 months) whenever a document is revised.

Action: RRobinson, TmcInturff, and TBarnett to devise a more uniform and reasonable means for implementing revised policies and requirements, taking into consideration that assessment preparations may have already commenced using prior versions (by April 30, 2005).

4) Financial Services Issues

Assessors were informed that, as of December 31, 2005, use of electronic fund transfers (EFTs) will become mandatory. Currently, only approximately 30% of the assessor corps receives EFTs. As of 12/31/05, hard checks will no longer be issued. Any assessors not currently utilizing EFTs will receive a memo from A2LA Financial

Manager, Lisa Drake, outlining the information needed by A2LA in order to set up an EFT.

5) Training on ISO/IEC 17025 (2005): Discussion of the Implementation Policy

A2LA President, Peter Unger, delivered a presentation (Attachment 1) regarding the revision to ISO/IEC 17025. The revision was passed with a 96.4% vote. Currently, ILAC recommends that compliance with the new/revised requirements can be accomplished via document review and that an on-site visit to laboratories is not necessary.

6) New Business

It was recommended that A2LA bring before the Board of Directors a proposal for creating a new classification of assessors. Currently there is a classification for lead assessor and team assessor. This proposal would suggest a classification between the two, for assessors who perform assessments solo, with financial compensation to be set somewhere between the compensation currently offered to lead and team assessors. Motion carried.

Action: Staff to make recommendation to the Board of Directors for creation of a third class of assessors for those that perform solo assessments. Compensation to be set somewhere between that currently offered for lead and team assessors (by March 14, 2005).

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Teresa C. Barnett, A2LA Quality Manager.