

	<i>American Association for Laboratory Accreditation</i>	
	<i>R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES</i>	Document Revised: January 4, 2012
	Page 1 of 18	

*R307- General
Requirements:
Accreditation
of ISO/IEC Guide 65
Product Certification Bodies
(January 2012)*

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American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

**R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF
ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES**

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 2 of 18

Table of Contents

PART A – INTRODUCTION	3
PART B - CONDITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION	5
PART C - A2LA ACCREDITATION PROCESS	
I. APPLICATION	5
II. ASSESSMENT PROCESS	6
III. DEFICIENCIES	7
IV. CORRECTIVE ACTION PROCESS	8
V. ACCREDITATION ANNIVERSARY DATE	8
VI. EXTENSIONS TO THE ACCREDITATION ANNIVERSARY DATE	9
VII. ACCREDITATION DECISION	9
VIII. ANNUAL REVIEW	10
IX. REASSESSMENT AND RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION	10
X. EXTRAORDINARY ASSESSMENTS	11
XI. ADDING TO THE SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION	11
XII. PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODY REFERENCE TO A2LA ACCREDITED STATUS	11
XIII. ACCREDITATION STATUS AND ADVERSE ACCREDITATION DECISIONS	11
XIV. SUSPENSION OF ACCREDITATION	12
XV. WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION	12
XVI. APPEALS PROCEDURE	13
XVII. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY	14
XVIII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY	15
A2LA ACCREDITATION PROCESS DIAGRAM	16
A2LA APPEALS PROCESS DIAGRAM	17



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 3 of 18

PART A

INTRODUCTION

The AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR LABORATORY ACCREDITATION (A2LA) is a non-profit, non-governmental, public service, membership organization dedicated to operating a nationwide, broad spectrum accreditation system. Accreditation is defined as a formal recognition of competence that an organization can perform specific functions, tests or calibrations. Accreditation is available to any type of certification body following the same principles and process as used to accredit laboratories (see A2LA [R101 - General Requirements: Accreditation of ISO/IEC 17025 Laboratories](#)).

A2LA was formed in 1978, as a practical and efficient organization to develop and manage a system to verify and recognize competent organizations. Accreditation is available for virtually all types of tests, calibrations, certifications, measurements and observations that are reproducible and properly documented.

A2LA recognizes the very close relationship between certification, testing, and inspection yet understands that certification includes a variety of activities not covered in testing laboratory or inspection body accreditation alone. Certification includes products (e.g. services, software, hardware, and processed materials) and processes, including the examination of test reports for compliance with specified criteria – both domestic and international. A certification body which is engaged in testing, inspection, measurement or sampling work may apply for accreditation for this work concurrently with its application for accreditation of its certification activities.

Accreditation is based on the assessment of performance of a certification body including (as appropriate) procedures, staff competence, inspection, review of product acceptability, and reporting. It is available to all Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) providing certification. A2LA welcomes applications for the accreditation of all types of certifications. The following are examples of work for which accreditation may be sought:

Appliances	Marine products
Automotive lifting devices	Personal protective and safety equipment
Bottled water and packaged ice	Plastic piping systems and components
Building products	Plumbing products
Building and institutional furniture	Recreational clothing
Class II biohazard cabinetry	Occupational health and safety/personal protective clothing
Drinking water additives	Sanitation products
Drinking water treatment units	Sealed insulating glass
Electric appliances and accessories	Software
Electrical products	Solar energy
Fenestration products	Swimming pools, spas and components
Food service equipment	Telecommunications
Gas appliances and accessories	Treated wood
Gas and oil products	Wastewater treatment units
Waste water treatment	Windows and doors
Manufactured products and recreational vehicle plumbing products	Wood Products

	American Association for Laboratory Accreditation	
	R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES	Document Revised: January 4, 2012
	Page 4 of 18	

Users of accredited certification bodies should review the Scope(s) of Accreditation from any accredited certification body when making decisions about using the certification body. The Scope(s) of Accreditation identifies the specific certifications for which the body is accredited.

The general requirement (general criteria) for A2LA accreditation of product certification bodies is *ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996(E), General Requirements for Bodies Operating Product Certification Systems*. Additional requirements (specific criteria) which are necessary to meet particular user needs (i.e. [C310 - Specific Checklist: Telecommunication Certification Body Evaluation](#) and [R308 - Specific Requirements - Telecommunication Certification Body Accreditation Program](#)) compliment these general requirements.

In effect, A2LA accreditation attests that a product certification body has demonstrated that:

- a) it is competent to perform specific product certifications or specific types of product certifications; and
- b) its management system is documented, fully operational and addresses and conforms to all elements of ISO/IEC Guide 65-1996(E) and the IAF GD-5 Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996; and
- c) it is operating in accordance with its management system; and
- d) it conforms to any additional requirements of A2LA or specific fields or programs necessary to meet particular user needs (e.g. FCC, IC, IDA, OFTA, WaterSense, RVIA, etc.).

It is A2LA policy not to accredit or renew accreditation of a product certification body that fails to meet the above criteria (see Part B, Conditions for Accreditation and Part C, Accreditation Process, sections on deficiencies, accreditation decisions and suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.)



 President & CEO



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 5 of 18

PART B

CONDITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION

In order to attain and maintain accreditation, product certification bodies must comply with A2LA [R102 - Conditions for Accreditation](#) published by A2LA. This document is available on the A2LA website, www.A2LA.org, or from A2LA Headquarters.

In order to apply, the applicant organization's Authorized Representative must agree to the conditions for accreditation and must attest that all statements made on the application are correct to the best of his/her knowledge and belief. An accredited organization's Authorized Representative is responsible for ensuring that all of the relevant conditions for accreditation are met as of the day it was signed. During the on-site assessment, the assessor will examine records and documentation to verify compliance with the Conditions for Accreditation as of the date it was signed.

PART C

A2LA ACCREDITATION PROCESS

I. Application

A product certification body applies for accreditation by obtaining the application package A2LA *F309 – Application for Accreditation: ISO/IEC Guide 65 Product Certification Bodies* (available from A2LA headquarters or the A2LA website www.A2LA.org) and submitting a completed application (with supporting information) to the address listed in the application. All applicants must agree to the Conditions for Accreditation (see Part B of this document), pay the appropriate fees set by the President & CEO, and provide detailed supporting information including (but not limited to):

- Proposed scope of accreditation (certification schemes).
- Quality manual;
- Organization structure; and
- Compliance with the program requirements for the proposed certification scheme.

All documentation must be provided in English and the assessment conducted in English. An appropriate English translation of pertinent documentation must be provided as well as a translator, if needed, to facilitate the assessment.

Accreditation is available to all product certification bodies. For standard-type product certifications, the scope of accreditation is normally identified in terms of standard product certification methods prepared by national, international, and professional standards writing bodies. For the certification bodies accredited testing laboratories, scopes are identified in terms of standard test methods prepared by national, international, and professional writing bodies.

MULTIPLE CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

Organizations may apply for accreditation to multiple product certification body schemes.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 6 of 18

However, when the certification schemes are unrelated (e.g. Telecommunication and WaterSense) or are developed for different, specific regulators/specifiers in a given industry, the certification body will be required to maintain separate scope(s) of accreditation for each certification program/scheme.

If you are applying for more than one certification program/scheme, a separate application must be completed for each certification program/scheme. Certification bodies that have applied or hold multiple accreditations will be eligible to receive a fee discount. See the Certification Body Accreditation Fees Part 4 of A2LA F309 – *Application for Accreditation: ISO/IEC Guide 65 Product Certification Bodies* for appropriate computation of fees.

The conditions for receiving the fee discount when applying for multiple certification programs are as follows:

- All application, renewal of accreditation and annual review processes must be coordinated through one central person, the Corporate Representative;
- All fee payments and invoices must be coordinated through the Corporate Representative;
- Certification bodies accredited to multiple certification programs/schemes will be assigned related certificate numbers (e.g., 301.01, 301.02, 301.03, etc.).

II. Assessment Process

The objective of an assessment is to establish whether or not a product certification body complies with ISO/IEC Guide 65, the IAF GD-5 Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996, the A2LA requirements for accreditation, and can competently perform the certifications for which accreditation is sought. However, when accreditation is required to demonstrate compliance with additional criteria which may be imposed by other authorities (e.g. FCC, IC, IDA, OFTA, etc.) the A2LA assessment will include such additional criteria.

Assessors may also provide advice, based on observations or in response to questions, in order to help the certification body improve its performance, but they are not permitted to provide consultation.

Pre-Site Visit

Once the application information is completed and the appropriate fees are paid, A2LA headquarters staff identifies and tentatively assigns one or more assessors to conduct an assessment at the certification body's site. Assessors are selected on the basis of their technical expertise, knowledge of the specific certification scheme(s), and the requirements of ISO/IEC Guide 65 so as to be better able to provide guidance to the product certifier. They do not represent their employers (if so affiliated) while conducting assessments for A2LA. The certification body has the right to ask for another assessor if it objects to the original assignment. A2LA assessors are drawn from industry, academia, government agencies, consultants, and from the laboratory, inspection, certification and professional communities. Assessors work under contract to A2LA. Assessments may last from one to several days depending on the extent of the desired scope and the size of the certification body. More than one assessor may be required.

Assessors are given an instruction manual and checklists to follow when performing an assessment. These documents are intended to ensure that assessments are conducted as uniformly and completely as possible among the assessors and from certification body to certification body.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 7 of 18

Before the assessment is conducted, the assessment team requests copies of the management system documentation and representative technical, inspection, record control and other SOPs in order to prepare for the assessment. The quality manual and related documentation must be reviewed by the assessment team before the assessment can begin. This review is done ideally before the assessment is scheduled.

Upon review of submitted documentation, the assessor(s) will provide the document review results to the certification body in writing, and may ask the certification body to implement corrective action to fill any documentation gaps required by ISO/IEC Guide 65 before scheduling the assessment.

Prior to scheduling the full assessment, the assessor(s) reviews the draft scope(s) to determine the certifications to review and checks on the availability of the personnel who perform the certifications. The assessor(s) of the certification body will also provide an assessment agenda.

On-Site Assessment

The full assessment involves, but is not limited to:

- An entry briefing with product certification body management;
- Interviews with technical staff;
- Demonstration of selected product certifications including, as applicable, product certifications at representative field locations;
- Assessment of the management system to verify that it is fully operational, conforms to all sections of ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996 and the IAF GD-5 Guidance document, and contains all the required documentation;
- A written report of assessor findings; and
- An exit briefing including the specific written identification of any deficiencies.

During the full assessment, the assessor(s) has the authority to stop the process at any time and consult with A2LA staff and the certification body's management to determine if the assessment should proceed. In cases where the number of significant non-conformances affects the ability to successfully complete a full assessment, the visit may be converted to a pre-assessment, or a suspension may be recommended if technical capability is lost (see Section XIV). The full assessment is then rescheduled when the certification body and assessor feel it is appropriate to proceed.

III. Deficiencies

During the assessment, the assessor(s) may observe deficiencies. A deficiency is any nonconformity to accreditation requirements including:

- a product certification body's inability to perform a certification for which it seeks accreditation;
- a product certification body's management system does not conform to a clause or section of ISO/IEC Guide 65 (including the application of the mandatory IAF Guidance document), is not adequately documented, or is not completely implemented in accordance with that documentation; or
- a product certification body does not conform to any additional requirements of A2LA or regulatory agencies necessary to meet particular needs.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

**R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF
ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES**

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 8 of 18

At the conclusion of an assessment, the assessor(s) prepares a report of findings, identifying deficiencies which, in the assessor's judgment, the product certification body must resolve in order to be accredited. The assessor(s) holds an exit briefing with top management of the product certification body, going over the findings and presenting the list of deficiencies (if applicable).

The authorized representative of the product certification body (or designee) is asked to sign the assessment report to attest that the deficiency report has been reviewed with the assessor(s). The signature does not imply that the product certification body representative concurs that the individual item(s) constitute a deficiency.

With authorization from the organization, the assessor(s) may also write an 'observation(s)' when they question the practice or competence of the product certification body, but there is not enough supporting objective evidence to justify a deficiency or the issue cannot be tied to the accreditation requirements. If this occurs, the product certification body does not have to respond to observations in order for accreditation to be granted. However, the observations are part of the assessment record and will be followed up by the next assessor(s) to visit the product certification body who will check to see if that observation was addressed by the product certifier, resulting in an improvement, or possibly may have progressed into a deficiency.

IV. Corrective Action Process

The product certification body is requested to respond, in writing, within 30 days after the date of the exit briefing detailing either its corrective action or why it does not believe that a deficiency exists. The corrective action response must include the product certification body's root cause analysis and a copy of any objective evidence (e.g., procedures, paid invoices, packaging slips, training records, etc.) to indicate that the corrective actions have been implemented/completed. It is possible that the assessor's review of the corrective action response may be needed to determine if the response is satisfactory. If this review is expected to take more than one hour's time, A2LA may invoice the product certification body for this time at the prevailing assessor rate. The assessor will discuss the possibility of this review with the product certification body during the exit briefing and obtain the product certifier's concurrence.

It is entirely possible that the product certifier will disagree with the findings that one or more items are deficiencies. In that case, the product certifier is requested to explain in its response why it disagrees with the assessor.

If a new applicant product certification body fails to respond in writing within four months after the date of the exit briefing, it may be required to submit a new application and be subject to new fees and reassessment should it wish to pursue accreditation after that time. A new applicant product certification body that fails to resolve all its deficiencies within six months of being assessed shall be subject to being reassessed at its expense. Even if the product certification body responds within six months, A2LA staff has the option to ask for reassessment of a product certification body before an initial accreditation vote is taken based on the number, extent and nature of the deficiencies. Renewal certification bodies must respond in writing within 30 days of the exit briefing, and resolve all deficiencies within 60 days of the exit briefing. Failure to meet these deadlines may result in adverse accreditation action (e.g. reassessment or suspension of accreditation). The Accreditation Council panel also has the option to require a follow-up assessment of any product certification body (new or renewal) before an affirmative accreditation decision can be rendered.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 9 of 18

V. Accreditation Anniversary Date

The anniversary date of a product certification body's accreditation is established 105 to 135 days after the last day of the final assessment before an initial accreditation decision, regardless of the length of time required to correct deficiencies. This date normally remains the same throughout the product certification body's enrollment.

VI. Extensions to the Accreditation Anniversary Date

If a product certification body is in their renewal process and is in good standing with A2LA when approaching their accreditation anniversary date, A2LA may extend their accreditation for an additional 90 days to complete the renewal of accreditation process. When fundamental non-conformances are identified during an assessment, extensions of accreditation are not considered until the product certification body submits objective evidence demonstrating that the non-conformances have been addressed. Likewise, extensions are not granted when delays are due to the product certifier's failure to respond to requests within established deadlines, such as:

- receipt of complete renewal application (including payment for relevant fees) after imposed due date;
- assessment not performed within assessor availability;
- receipt of response to assessor deficiency report beyond 30 days of assessment exit briefing;
- closure of all deficiencies beyond 60 days of assessment exit briefing.

When a product certification body is granted an extension, a revised Scope and Certificate of Accreditation will be posted to the A2LA website, which reflects the extended anniversary date. Upon completion of the renewal process, both documents are reissued, reflecting the renewed anniversary date.

VII. Accreditation Decisions

Before an accreditation decision ballot is sent to Accreditation Council members, staff shall review the deficiency response, including the product certification body's root cause analysis and objective evidence of completed corrective action, for adequacy and completeness. If staff has any doubt about the adequacy or completeness of any part of the deficiency response, the response is submitted to the assessor(s). Since all deficiencies must be resolved before accreditation can be granted, staff shall ask the product certification body for further written response in those cases where staff recognizes that an affirmative vote is not likely because of incomplete corrective action in response to deficiencies or obvious lack of supporting evidence that corrective action has been completely implemented.

Staff selects a panel of at least three Accreditation Council members for voting. The panel is chosen so that the full range of the product certifier's capabilities are adequately covered by the Accreditation Council review. Especially in the case of those product certifiers seeking (re)accreditation for multiple certification activities, it may be necessary to select more than three AC members in order to accomplish this. The product certifier is consulted about any potential conflicts of interest with the Accreditation Council membership prior to sending their package to the Accreditation Council. Generally, at least two affirmative ballots (with no unresolved negative ballots) of the three ballots distributed must be received before accreditation can be granted. If three or more AC members are required in order to ensure a full review of the product certifier's certification activities, (re)accreditation may not be granted until all of these votes have been received and any negative votes resolved.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 10 of 18

It is the primary responsibility of the assessor(s) to judge whether the observed evidence is serious enough to warrant a deficiency. However, the panel members that are asked to vote on an accreditation decision are required to make a judgment whether or not deficiencies still exist based on information contained in the ballot package. Accordingly, panel members can differ with assessor(s) judgments, based upon their interpretation of the criteria for the specific case under question and the supporting evidence available whether a deficiency does or does not exist. Staff attempts to resolve these differences as they arise, but it remains for the panel to make the initial decision.

Staff shall notify the product certification body asking for further written response based on the specific justification for one or more negative votes received from the panel. If further written response still does not satisfy the negative voter(s), a reassessment may be proposed or required. If a reassessment is requested by more than one voter, the product certification body is asked to accept a reassessment. If the certification body refuses the proposed reassessment, a nine-member Accreditation Council appeals panel is balloted (see Sections XIII. Adverse Accreditation Decisions and XVI. Appeals Procedures below).

If accreditation is granted, the A2LA staff prepares and forwards a certificate and scope of accreditation to the product certification body. The certification body should keep its scope of accreditation available to show clients or potential clients the certification capabilities for which it is accredited. A2LA staff also uses the scopes of accreditation to respond to inquiries and to prepare the A2LA online directory.

VIII. Annual Review

Accreditation is granted for two years. However, after the initial year of accreditation, each product certification body must pay annual fees (including applicable surcharges) and assessor fees and undergo a surveillance visit by an assessor. This surveillance visit is performed to confirm that the certification body's management system and technical capabilities remain in compliance with the accreditation requirements. Failure to complete the surveillance assessment within the designated time frame may result in adverse accreditation action (see Section XIII).

For subsequent annual reviews occurring after the renewal of accreditation (see Section IX) each product certification body must pay annual fees (including surcharges) and submit updating information on its organization, facilities and key personnel. Objective evidence of completion of the internal audit and management review is also required. If the renewal product certification body does not promptly provide complete annual review documentation, or significant changes to the facility or organization have occurred, a surveillance visit and payment of the associated assessor fees is required. Telecommunication Certification Bodies will be required to undergo a surveillance assessment on each of the odd years between renewal assessments. Depending on the outcome of the previous year's full assessment and the number and nature of FCC TCB audit issues, the surveillance assessment may be waived or performed remotely. This decision will be made by A2LA staff in consultation with a technical assessor.

IX. Reassessment and Renewal of Accreditation

A2LA conducts a full reassessment of all accredited product certification bodies at least every two years. Reassessments are also conducted when evaluations and submissions from the product certification body or its clients indicate significant technical changes in the capability of the product certification bodies have occurred.



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 11 of 18

Each accredited product certification body is sent a renewal application (hard copy or accessible from the A2LA website) well in advance of the expiration date of its accreditation to allow sufficient time to complete the renewal process. A successful reassessment at the product certification body's site must be completed before accreditation is renewed for another two years.

If deficiencies are noted during the renewal assessment, the product certifier is asked to write to A2LA within 30 days after the assessment stating the corrective action taken. All deficiencies must be resolved before accreditation is renewed for another two years.

The renewal decision process is similar to the initial decision process (see Section VII. Accreditation Decisions), except as follows:

- 1) If there are no deficiencies or only a few deficiencies of a minor nature (i.e., the non-compliances do not directly affect the integrity of certifications) and there is sufficient objective evidence that the deficiencies have been resolved, the President may elect to renew accreditation without an Accreditation Council panel vote.
- 2) If there are major deficiencies (i.e., the non-compliances directly affect the integrity of certifications), the staff advises the product certification body of the required time-frame (normally 30 days) in which to resolve all deficiencies or be subject to further actions leading to suspension or withdrawal of accreditation (see Sections XIII. Adverse Accreditation Decisions, XIV. Suspension of Accreditation, and XV. Withdrawal of Accreditation). Several related minor deficiencies or repeat deficiencies from previous assessments may also be considered a major deficiency. In these cases, a ballot of the Accreditation Council panel is conducted using the same voting procedure as for initial accreditation decisions.

In cases where significant deficiencies are identified in a renewal assessment, the product certification body may be required to undergo a surveillance assessment in conjunction with the next annual review to verify continued implementation of corrective actions (see Section VIII above).

X. Extraordinary Assessments

Although rare, A2LA may require product certification bodies to undergo an extraordinary assessment as a result of complaints or significant changes to the certification body's management system. Pursuant to the severity of the complaint, this 'for cause' assessment may be performed with little or no advance warning.

XI. Adding to the Scope of Accreditation

A product certification body may request an expansion to its scope of accreditation at any time. Such a request must be submitted in writing to A2LA headquarters. Each request is handled on a case-by-case basis. If the additional certifications require a new technology or certification scheme, another assessment is likely to be required. Similarly, if a certification body relocates, a follow-up assessment is normally warranted. Please also refer to Part C, Multiple Certification Schemes.

	<i>American Association for Laboratory Accreditation</i>	
	<i>R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES</i>	Document Revised: January 4, 2012
	Page 12 of 18	

XII. Product Certification Body Reference to A2LA Accredited Status

The requirements pertaining to the use of the “A2LA Accredited” symbol and to any other reference to A2LA accreditation are outlined in A2LA *P101 - Reference to A2LA Accredited Status – A2LA Advertising Policy*. The policy is available from A2LA Headquarters or on the A2LA website, www.A2LA.org. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in suspension or revocation of a product certification body’s accreditation.

XIII. Adverse Accreditation Decisions

There are various levels of status that may be assigned to product certification bodies that cannot uphold the requirements for initial or continued accreditation:

Voluntary Withdrawal – An applicant product certification body not yet accredited, or a renewal product certification body, can decide to terminate further accreditation action and voluntarily withdraw from the accreditation program. The product certification body contact must inform A2LA in writing of this request. A2LA does not publicize the fact that a new product certification body had applied and then withdrawn.

Inactive – A product certification body is designated as inactive when it has specifically requested in writing that its accreditation be allowed to temporarily expire due to unforeseen circumstances that prevent it from adhering to the A2LA Conditions for Accreditation. To regain accredited status, the inactive product certification body must notify A2LA in writing of this desire, agree to undergo a full reassessment (when applicable), and pay all renewal fees and reassessment costs.

A product certification body that has relocated, changed ownership or has dramatically altered its management system may also be designated as inactive until compliance to all relevant requirements can be confirmed (i.e. by a visit to the certification body’s site).

The Inactive status can be given to a product certification body for no longer than one year, after which time the product certification body is removed from A2LA records and designated as withdrawn.

XIV. Suspension of Accreditation

Suspension of all or part of a product certification body's accreditation may be a decision made by either the President or Accreditation Council panel. The accreditation applicable to a specific product certification body may be suspended upon adequate evidence of:

- non-compliance with the requirements of a nature not requiring immediate withdrawal (i.e. identification of significant deficiencies during an assessment);
- improper use of the “A2LA Accredited” symbol (i.e., misleading prints or advertisements are not solved by suitable retractions and appropriate remedial measures by the certification body); and
- other departures from the requirements of the A2LA accreditation program (i.e., failure to pay the required fees, submit annual review information within 60 calendar days after it is due, or complete a surveillance assessment within the designated time frame).



American Association for Laboratory Accreditation

R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES

Document Revised:
January 4, 2012

Page 13 of 18

When an accredited product certification body is suspended, A2LA shall confirm an official suspension in a certified letter, return receipt requested, (or equivalent means) to the product certification body's authorized representative, stating:

- the cause;
- the conditions under which the suspension will be lifted;
- that the suspension will be publicized on the A2LA website;
- that the suspension is for a temporary period to be determined by the time needed to take corrective action;
- that, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the notice, the product certification body may submit in person, or in writing, information in opposition to the suspension, including any additional information that raises a genuine dispute over material facts;
- that a further review will be conducted to consider such information and a further written notification will be sent to the certification body by certified mail, return receipt requested, indicating whether the suspension has been terminated, modified, left in force or converted to a withdrawal of accreditation.

XV. Withdrawal of Accreditation

A2LA shall withdraw accreditation for any of the following causes:

- under the relevant provisions for suspension of accreditation;
- if surveillance or reassessment indicates that deficiencies are of a serious nature as judged by the Accreditation Council panel;
- when complaints are received relating to one or more of the product certification body's reports/certifications and investigation reveals serious deficiencies in the management system and/or competence in conducting the specific certifications;
- if the system rules are changed and the product certification body either will not or cannot ensure conformance to the new requirements;
- on any other grounds specifically provided for under these program requirements or formally agreed between A2LA and the product certification body;
- when such action is necessary to protect the reputation of A2LA; and
- at the formal request of the product certification body .

When it is proposed to withdraw accreditation, A2LA shall issue a written notice by certified mail, return receipt requested:

- that withdrawal is being considered;
- of the reasons for the proposed withdrawal sufficient to put the product certification body on notice of the cause;
- that within thirty (30) days of receipt of the notice, the product certification body may submit in person, or in writing, information in opposition to the withdrawal, including any additional information that raises a genuine dispute over material facts; and
- of the effect of proposed withdrawal, including removing the product certification body name from the A2LA on-line directory and publicizing the action on the A2LA website.

A product certification body may appeal to A2LA against a decision to withdraw or not to award accreditation.

	<i>American Association for Laboratory Accreditation</i>	
	<i>R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES</i>	Document Revised: January 4, 2012
	Page 14 of 18	

XVI. Appeals Procedure

There are two possible levels that an appeal can reach before being resolved:

- 1) Accreditation Council (nine-member appeals panel);
- 2) Board of Directors.

The A2LA staff shall advise the applicant in writing of its right to challenge an adverse accreditation decision by the President or initial Accreditation Council panel (see Section VII). The appeals policy, including an applicant's right to a hearing, are contained in the A2LA Bylaws.

An appeal shall be lodged no later than thirty (30) days after notification of the decision by forwarding a certified letter to A2LA for timely consideration by the nine-member appeals panel of the Accreditation Council.

Any decision from an appeals vote which would deny or withdraw a laboratory's complete accreditation, must be agreed upon by a two-thirds of the (sum of the affirmative and negative – abstentions are not included) votes received from the nine-member appeals panel of the Accreditation Council. Votes must be received from all members with specific technical background necessary to review the laboratory's scope of accreditation. The decision of the Accreditation Council's appeals group is communicated in writing to the appellant.

If the decision is not favorable to the appellant, the appellant may lodge a further appeal within thirty (30) days of notification by forwarding a certified letter to A2LA for timely consideration by the Board of Directors. This letter shall include appropriate substantiation for the appeal.

This letter and appropriate background documentation will be promptly transmitted to the members of the Board of Directors appeals group, the composition of which to be determined by the Board Chairman taking into account any conflict-of-interest considerations and the nature of the appeal.

The decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and binding, except that any court having jurisdiction may set aside such decision when bias, fraud or misconduct of the Board has been determined, and is communicated in writing to the appellant.

This letter and appropriate background documentation will be promptly transmitted to the members of the Board of Directors appeals group, the composition of which to be determined by the Board Chairman taking into account any conflict-of-interest considerations and the nature of the appeal. The decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and is communicated in writing to the appellant.

XVII. Confidentiality Policy

All information provided by applicants in connection with a request for an application package, an application for accreditation, or an assessment is confidential. Such information is examined by a small group of A2LA staff, assessors, and Accreditation Council and external bodies as needed for recognition of the program. All are made aware of its confidentiality. Such information shall not be released unless the applicant provides A2LA permission in writing to do so.

	American Association for Laboratory Accreditation	
	R307 – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS: ACCREDITATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65 PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODIES	Document Revised: January 4, 2012
	Page 15 of 18	

Documents necessary to convey information about accredited product certification bodies and their scopes of accreditation are not confidential.

In response to a question about whether or not a particular product certification body has applied for accreditation, A2LA simply responds by saying that the product certification body is not accredited. Staff neither confirm nor deny whether a product certification body has ever applied for accreditation. If the product certification body itself is saying that it has applied for accreditation, it is the product certification body's responsibility to release the information regarding its applicant status.

If the caller says that the product certification body claims it applied, staff shall take the name, address and phone number of the caller to check to see if the product certification body is misleading the client but staff still will not verify the organization's application.

Should an applicant product certification body require that staff verify for a potential client that it has applied to A2LA, staff shall indicate that it has applied only if the applicant makes such a request to A2LA in writing or designates on the application for accreditation that A2LA is authorized to release information regarding the applicant's status.

If an inquiry is made about a product certification body whose accreditation has lapsed but is in the renewal process, staff can indicate that the product certification body is not now accredited but is in the process of renewal, if that is the case. If the renewal product certification body's accreditation has lapsed with no indication (return of renewal forms or payment) of pursuit of renewal, staff indicates simply that the product certification body is not accredited.

XVIII. Conflict of Interest Policy

Since its inception, A2LA has had a policy that actual or apparent conflicts of interest must be avoided as mandated by normal business ethics.

Consistent with the principles set forth in ISO/IEC 17011, *Conformity Assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*, A2LA believes that it is vital that its accreditation services be impartial and objective, uninfluenced by the private interests of individuals acting for A2LA.

Accordingly, any person directly involved in actions relating to the A2LA accreditation process shall avoid direct participation in A2LA actions that may involve an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

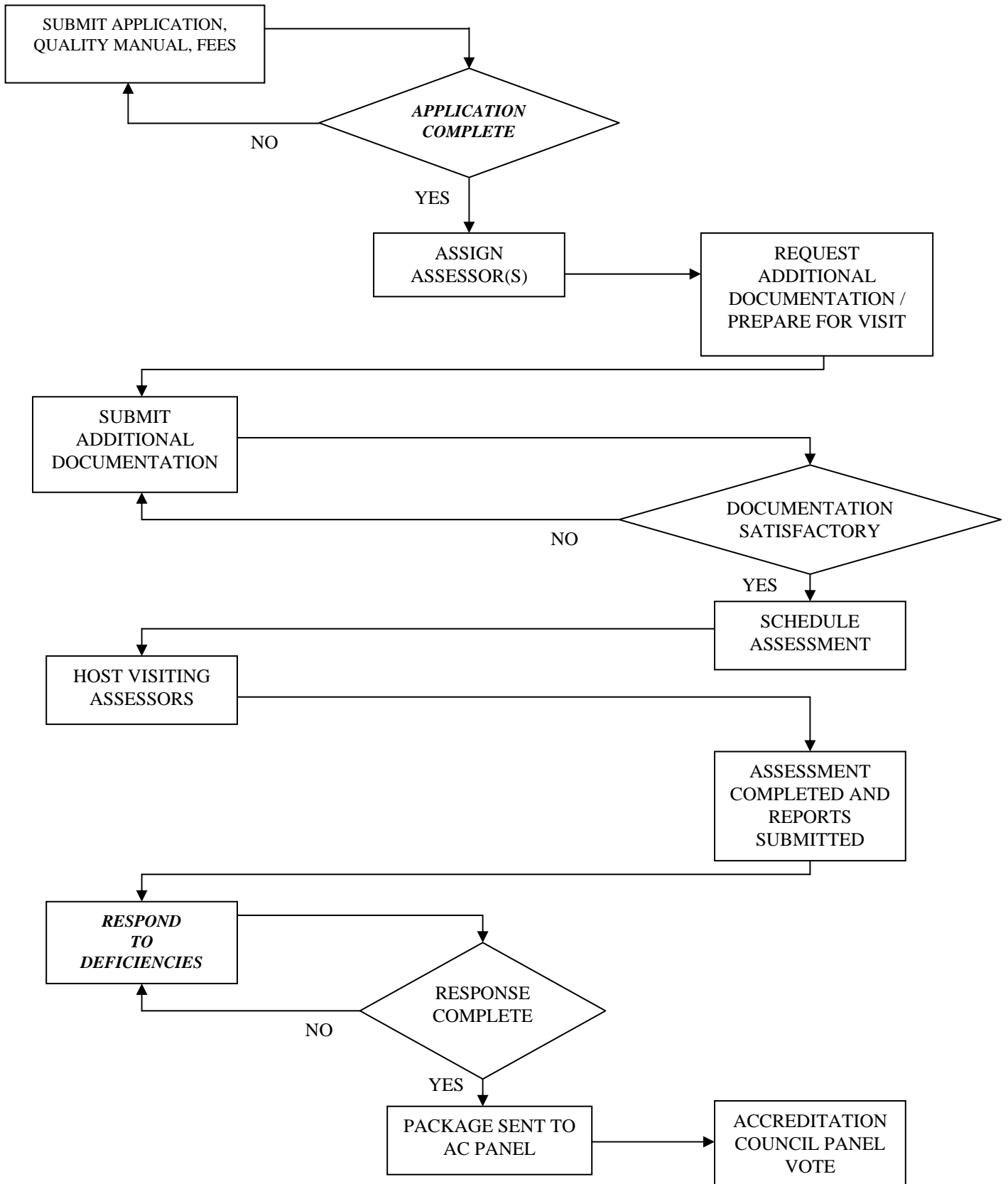
The Chairman of the Board and the President shall, as promptly as possible, take all possible means to prevent or overcome any such actions that may conceivably be in violation of this policy.

A2LA ACCREDITATION PROCESS DIAGRAM

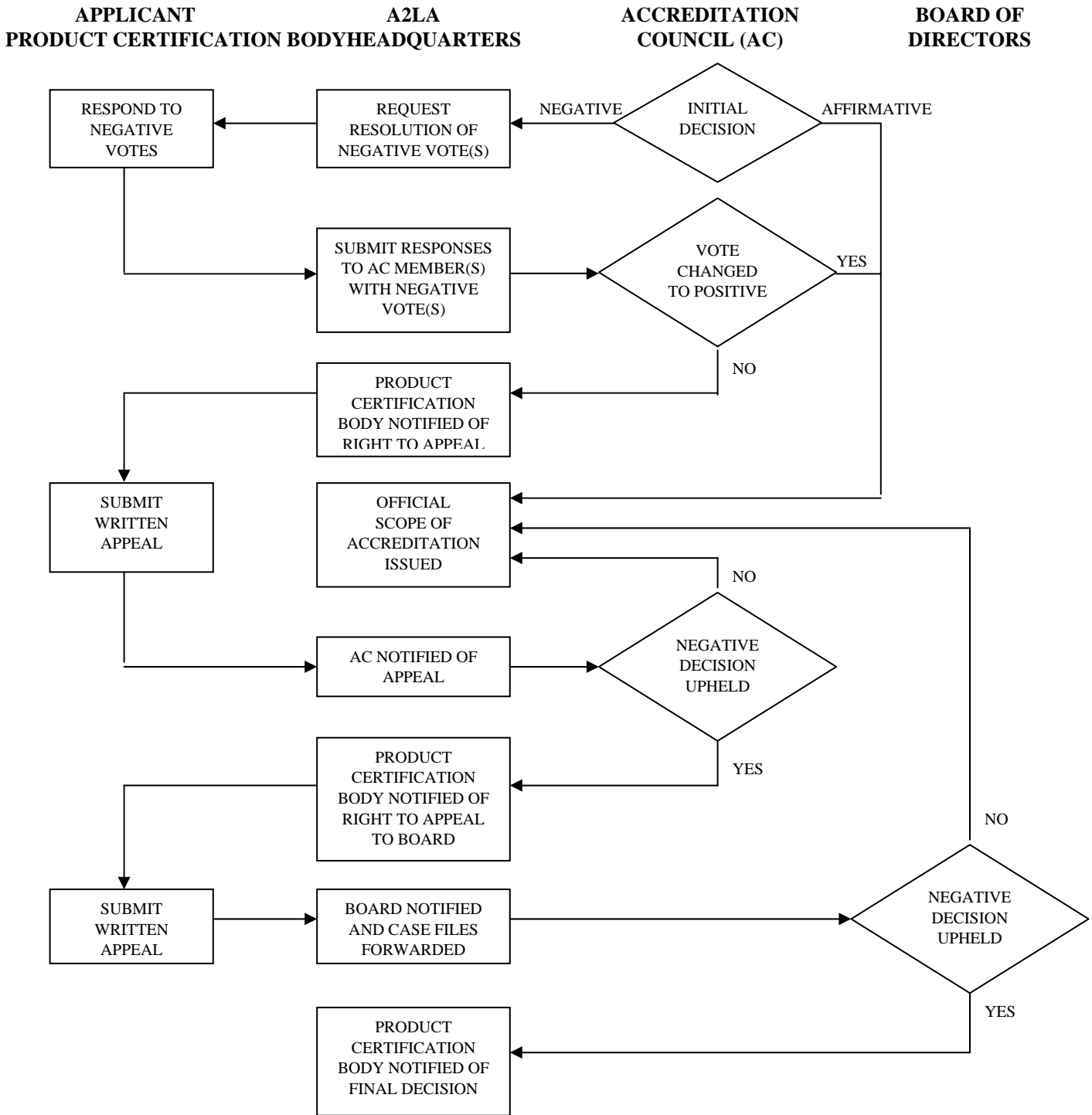
**APPLICANT
PRODUCT CERTIFICATION BODY**

**A2LA
HEADQUARTERS**

ASSESSORS



A2LA APPEALS PROCESS DIAGRAM



APPENDIX A - Document Revision History

Date	Description
09/18/2007	Original Issue of this document.
10/2/2008	Updated the Conditions for Accreditation. Update references to F309 application. Further clarification on handling extensions of accreditation. Further clarification on the appeals process and the applicable responsibilities.
07/25/2009	Revised document to adjust discount for branch system and remove anniversary date requirement. Added requirement that CAB's would also be assessed to IAF G65 Guidance Document. Removed delinquent status
11/05/2010	Added multiple certification schemes section; removed branch systems sections.
1/4/2012	Editorial changes and added the option of waiving the surveillance assessment with the consultation with a technical assessor.