



What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the formal recognition that an organization is competent to perform specific processes, activities, or tasks (which are detailed in a scope of accreditation) in a reliable credible and accurate manner. It follows that:

- Accreditation must be objective, transparent and effective.
- An Accreditation Body (AB) must use highly professional competent assessors and technical experts in all relevant fields.
- All AB employees (and subcontractors) must be reliable, ethical and competent in both accreditation processes and the relevant technical fields.

Accreditation has a much broader application than the current, narrow definition in ISO/IEC 17000 would suggest. Several types of organizations that are subject to accreditation are not strictly conformity assessment bodies.

Who benefits from accreditation?

- Regulators:
 - As a basis for policy making.
 - As a mean of market regulation.
 - To have confidence in the results.
 - To avoid the need to set up equivalent attestation infrastructures.
- Trade facilitators
 - As a mean for overcoming technical barriers to trade.
 - As the technical foundation for government to government trade arrangements.
 - Assist in conformity assessment infrastructure building, in developing economies.
- The general public:
 - To ensure quality of results and to have confidence in them.
 - To ensure regulators' interests including health and safety, environment, security and other societal protection and performance requirements.
 - To use AB's, as a professional, independent objective referral organization in cases of complaints and disputes.



- Industry:

To ensure valid results during development, manufacturing, delivery and distribution of their products and services.

To underpin domestic/international trade.

To overcome technical barriers to trade.

- Conformity Assessment Bodies and other accredited organizations:

To save the need for duplicate assessments and evaluation of purchased products/services and their suppliers, to recognize their competence and ability to satisfy their customers' needs.

As a mean to reduce risks.

Mean to increase credibility (marketing tool).

Accreditation enhances confidence in certificates and conformity statements. Accreditation enhances quality of results by ensuring their: traceability, comparability, validity and commutability. Accreditation may be required for whole organizations (not just quality management systems, not just products) - anywhere where peer assessment of competence is required.

What is accreditable?

Bodies (or organizations) that:

- Make professional judgement in processes of education and certification.
- Implement processes that require highly professional skills crucial for making critical decisions (for example, policy making trade, medical treatment, environmental treatment, etc).
- Assign values to products upon which results are being based (Reference Materials, Calibration, Proficiency Testing) and which involves human judgement and skill.
- Evaluate processes crucial for customers and stakeholders who do not have the professional knowledge to evaluate them (for example, in the fields of medical testing, public health, public safety, environmental control, safety assessments, etc).



- Implement processes driven by heavy competition that a government or clients (as a protector of the people) would like to formally oversee to ensure a 'level playing field'.

Accreditation (provided it is carried out by highly competent people) is the formal tool to provide a high degree of assurance that the organisations implementing these processes (activities or tasks) are competent. Outcomes and actual performance by accredited organizations over time are important to maintain accreditation.

ILAC and IAF

ILAC and IAF members operate according to ISO/IEC 17011 and other ILAC/IAF requirements (for example, the A and P Series documents). These sets of rules may be used not only when conformity assessment is being evaluated but also when implementing other type of processes (such as medical analysis and calibration, as well as educational work in universities or medical treatment in hospitals) is being evaluated.

It should be noted that ILAC/IAF members might be required by national or regional authorities to operate outside the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011.