

## GAC Technical Note 4

### Proficiency testing



The primary function of proficiency testing is to supplement the internal quality control procedures of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) providing an additional external audit of their measurement or testing capabilities. The results proficiency testing programs are also used to complement GAC's assessment activities.

The following policy has been formulated for the participation of CABs in relevant proficiency testing activities and is applied as described in the supplementary accreditation requirements.

## Policy

### Participation in PT programs

Each applicant or accredited CAB is required to participate in proficiency testing programs. Participation in proficiency testing may be required as follows:

- prior to gaining accreditation with GAC;
- as requested by the GAC Service Delivery Manager;
- when requesting extensions and/or variations to the scope of accreditation.

CABs are encouraged to participate in as broad a range of proficiency testing activities as practicable and are available. Once every two years is advisable for each major area of test or measurement.

Where a proficiency testing program is not available for an activity covered by the scope of accreditation, the CAB must demonstrate how it maintains confidence in its results. Participation in intra or inter-laboratory programs should also be considered e.g. sample exchange.

### Selection of Proficiency Testing Providers

CABS should select proficiency testing providers taking into account the following points:

- the CAB is to determine which provider(s) best suits its needs i.e. scope;
- where possible, the provider should be accredited as fulfilling the requirements of ISO/IEC 17043; and
- where not accredited, the CAB should satisfy itself that provider meets the requirements of ISO/IEC 17043.

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### **Performance in programs**

Performance in proficiency testing programs is reviewed during the on-site assessment (unless for specific identified programs - In those cases feedback on participant performance is required to be provided to the GAC at the same time the results are forwarded to participants).

The GAC may seek an immediate comment on the corrective action taken where necessary.

The GAC will review each applicant or accredited CABs response and either accept that the problems have been resolved and require no further action or take further action where applicable.

Further action may include:

- requiring further proficiency testing;
- suspending all or part of the accreditation; or
- undertaking a partial or full assessment.

### **Confidentiality policy**

All information received regarding a CAB's involvement in a proficiency testing program will remain confidential.