

A140-02 - GUIDANCE FOR LABORATORIES ON REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

Revision 1.01

August 1, 2024



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Scope	1
2.0 Tools	1
3.0 Pre-assessment Arrangements	1
4.0 Personnel	2
5.0 Timing	2
6.0 Assessment of Appendices	2
7.0 Revision History	3

1.0 SCOPE

Remote assessments are one tool used by CALA to determine conformance to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and other CALA policies. Laboratories that are identified to undergo a remote assessment must comply with A140-01- CALA Policy on Remote Assessments, which is publicly available on the CALA website (www.cala.ca). This document, on the other hand, is a guidance document to help CALA laboratories through the process. Following the guidance in this document will make the remote assessment efficient and effective for the laboratory.

2.0 TOOLS

Paramount to a successful remote assessment are the appropriate tools.

The laboratory will need internet access, with sufficient bandwidth to run virtual meetings.

If appendices are being assessed, it is best if the laboratory work area itself has internet access. Smart phones with video capability work great for this purpose but be mindful that if the laboratory itself does not have Wi-Fi that cellular data will be utilized. If a smart phone is not readily available, a laptop with a camera or GoPro are two other devices that could be used. Ensure devices are fully charged or have alternative power sources available during the assessment. Where resources allow, it is useful to have multiple devices available for assessments with multiple assessors.

There are several video conferencing applications available (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting). CALA will work with the most suitable option for the laboratory.

It may be useful to have a scanner available, so that records can be scanned and submitted to the assessor. If the laboratory does not have a scanner, a photo of a document or record has proved to be a good alternative.

3.0 PRE-ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

As always, ensure that the assessor is aware of the laboratory hours of operation and availability of key staff. One thing that never has to be considered during an on-site visit is that the assessor(s) and laboratory may be in different time zones so be very clear in your communication!

The assessor will request more documents and records up front (e.g., nonconformance reports, complaint log, examples of opportunities and risks, calibration certificates, etc. ...) in order to save time during the virtual meeting. It is in the laboratory's best interests to submit any documents and records as requested (and in a timely manner), as this will only make the

virtual interviews go more smoothly. Otherwise, during the virtual interviews, laboratory staff will have to scan those items at that time, which will make the virtual meeting more disjointed and will cause the virtual meetings to be prolonged longer than necessary. Also, documents and records should be submitted in a workable format (e.g., Word or an editable pdf) as much as possible so that the assessor can make notes and highlights directly on the documents and records. Documents and records should be uploaded via CAMs; it is far more efficient and will not clog up e-mail systems.

As part of the pre-assessment arrangements, it is advisable to set up a test of the application that is to be used during the remote assessment.

4.0 PERSONNEL

It is best to have laboratory IT personnel nearby to troubleshoot any issues with virtual meetings on the laboratory's end.

Have key staff available for the Opening and Closing meetings.

5.0 TIMING

By far, one of the biggest differences between a remote assessment and the on-site assessment is the amount of time to deliver the assessment and the timing of the activities. As can be imagined, if an assessor needs to verify a document or record and the assessment needs to be put on hold so that laboratory staff can find and submit the document or record, valuable time will be lost, and the process will seem very disjointed. That is the main reason why it is best to submit everything up front as is possible, or to keep notes and submit all the required objective evidence at an appropriate time. That being said, even with the most organized assessor(s) and laboratory staff will find that a remote assessment will likely take a bit longer than if an on-site was being conducted simply because being on a videoconference is totally different than being in the laboratory since most people can only be on a videoconference for finite amounts of time. As such, it is best to break up the days differently. For example, a reassessment that normally takes 2 days on-site may be best broken up into 3 days with only 4-5 hours per day.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF APPENDICES

As with an on-site assessment, it is best that the analyst responsible for the test method being assessed is the person who is interviewed and that the interview is conducted at the analyst's workstation. The assessor(s) will want to view instruments and records, and may even ask to

witness some testing (in whole, or in part). Experience tells us that it's useful to have someone else hold the camera or have a fixed stand while the analyst is being interviewed or demonstrating equipment, in order to keep the image stable for the assessor(s).

7.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision No.	Revision Date	Revision
1.0	July 23, 2020	Initial publication
1.1	August 1, 2024	Removed FAQs. Removed preference for use of GoToMeeting.