

A140-01 - CALA POLICY ON REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

Revision 1.3

July 7, 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Scope.....	2
3.0 Definitions	2
4.0 Policy	2
5.0 References.....	4
6.0 Revision History	4

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) becomes more advanced and sophisticated, there is an opportunity to use ICT to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of accreditation assessment activities, including in remote assessment situations. When ICT is used to undertake accreditation assessment activities the integrity of, and confidence in, assessment results must be maintained.
- 1.2 Remote assessments can provide the Accreditation Bodies (ABs) additional assessment techniques to facilitate the assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) with the same or enhanced degree of effectiveness as compared with traditional on-site assessments. Furthermore, remote assessment techniques may permit the AB to witness and assess more locations and capabilities with approximately the same amount of resources that it utilizes for on-site assessments.
- 1.3 Examples of the use of ICT to facilitate remote assessments may include but are not limited to:
 - a) meetings - utilizing teleconference facilities, including audio, video, and data sharing;
 - b) assessments of documents and records utilizing remote access, either synchronously (in real-time) or asynchronously (when applicable);
 - c) recording of information and evidence utilizing pictures, video, or audio recordings; and
 - d) providing visual/audio access to remote or potentially hazardous locations.
- 1.4 The objectives for the application of ICT for remote assessment purposes are:
 - a) to provide a methodology that is sufficiently flexible and non-prescriptive, which can be used to confirm conformance, assure competence, and promote confidence.
 - b) to ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid mishandling that could compromise the integrity of the accreditation assessment process, especially at times the on-site assessments are not practically feasible; and
 - c) to support the principles of safety and sustainability.

2.0 SCOPE

This document outlines CALA policy on the use of ICT for the remote assessment of all types of CABs

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Remote Assessment: A remote assessment is defined as the assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a laboratory using electronic means (ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Section 3.26); a note to this entry clarifies that a virtual site is an online environment allowing persons to execute processes (e.g., in a cloud environment).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing, and transmitting the information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Remote assessments were specifically developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but may be considered for use under other circumstances, including but not limited to the following scenarios:

- a) travel restrictions (travel to a CAB or specific location is not reasonable/feasible; e.g., safety reasons)
- b) when a visit to a CAB or assessment location is not possible during crises or in response to directions from government and regulators based on security, health, and safety measures;
- c) when there are unavoidable changes in scheduling for the assessor or the CAB (i.e., personal issues, change in business priorities, etc.);
- d) the number of sites for the AB to assess within its timeframe;
- e) the CAB has a systematic implementation of its management system where records, data, etc. can be reviewed at any site irrespective of where the work is being performed;
- f) the assessment is for a minor extension to the scope of accreditation (e.g., the laboratory has similar competencies on its accredited scope of testing)
- g) the CAB has a proven track record of conformance at the location of the remote assessment;

- h) the risk level of the assessment is deemed low by the AB;
- i) an activity or activities planned for the on-site assessment could not be completed and extending the on-site assessment is not the best resolution;
- j) a follow-up assessment is required, and a remote assessment is deemed appropriate considering the above points.

In all cases, the underlying principle is that the assessment activity is of a low risk level to CALA. Initial assessments or extensions of scope where the competency is new to the laboratory will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the level of risk into account.

The objective of the remote assessment is the same as any assessment - to establish the level of confidence in the laboratory's testing processes by direct observations. The only difference is that the assessment is carried out through an electronic medium.

4.2 A remote assessment may be undertaken following a risk-based decision-making process undertaken by CALA staff. The decision to conduct a remote assessment is solely at CALA's discretion and shall not be influenced by the CABs preference. If it is determined that an assessment can be carried out remotely, it is CALA policy that:

- The laboratory shall have key staff available for the duration of the remote assessment, including someone from management, a person responsible for implementation of the management system, and analysts that routinely perform the tests in question.
- The laboratory shall have appropriate devices with cameras and allow these devices into the laboratory to facilitate appropriate witnessing of equipment and processes.
- The laboratory shall provide requested documents and records to the assessor in a timely manner. These documents and records may be over and above those uploaded to CAMS six (6) weeks prior to the visit, as per the normal process.
- A nonconformity will be raised if information cannot be shared remotely (i.e., due to confidentiality or access issues). The nonconformity can be addressed when the laboratory is responding to findings.
- The assessor may terminate the assessment prior to the schedule due to an inability to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during a virtual meeting.
- CALA may decide at any time throughout the process if an on-site visit is required instead of, or in addition to, a remote assessment. The remote assessment is meant to complement traditional on-site processes – not replace them.
- Regulatory requirements, stakeholder schemes, normative documents, and conformity assessment standards may impose limitations on the use of ICT for assessments and may take precedence over this document.

5.0 REFERENCES

1. ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity Assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.
2. APAC-TEC0-001 Guidance on remote assessments.
3. IAF MD4:2023 IAF mandatory document for the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for auditing/assessment purposes.

6.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision No.	Revision Date	Revision
1.0	May 04, 2020	Document published.
1.1	July 23, 2020	Changed document control number to A140-01 (with the publication of an associated guidance document A140-02).
1.2	March 1, 2021	Modified wording on initial assessments and extensions in introduction.
1.3	July 7, 2023	Updated throughout. Revised introduction. Added scope, definitions, references.