

SADCAS

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY



Accreditation of a Laboratory or ISO 9001 Certification?

Accreditation

Accreditation is the process of providing recognition to an organization for its competence in performing specific conformity assessment tasks. Conformity assessment services include testing, certification and inspection.

Accreditation also applies to calibration laboratories, proficiency testing and production of certified reference materials.

Certification

Certification is third party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons.

Accreditation of a laboratory or ISO 9001 Certification?

When selecting a laboratory to fulfill your testing and or calibration needs you need to be sure that the laboratory can provide you with accurate and reliable results. The technical competence of a laboratory depends on a number of factors including the following:

- ❖ Qualifications, training and experience of the staff.
- ❖ The right equipment which is appropriately calibrated and maintained.
- ❖ Adequate quality assurance and quality control procedures.
- ❖ Appropriate sampling practices.
- ❖ Sound testing/inspection procedures.
- ❖ Accurate recording and reporting of data.
- ❖ Appropriate testing environment.

Laboratories can be audited and certified to an international management system standard such as ISO 9001. This standard is widely used in manufacturing and service organizations to evaluate their system for managing the quality of their product or service. Whilst ISO 9001 is an effective management tool, certification of a laboratory to ISO 9001 does not provide assurance on the accuracy and reliability of the test, inspection or calibration data.

Throughout the world many countries now rely on accreditation as a means of independently evaluating laboratory competence. Accreditation involves the assessment of technical competence by specialist assessors who undertake thorough evaluation of all factors that affect the production of technical data. The criteria are defined in the international standard ISO/IEC 17025 for testing and or calibration laboratories and ISO 15189 for medical laboratories. Laboratory accreditation also covers the relevant quality system elements addressed in ISO 9001 certification. In order to ensure continued compliance, accredited facilities are regularly assessed so as to maintain their standards of technical expertise.

For laboratories concerned with demonstrating technical competence underpinned by a quality system, ISO /IEC 17025 for testing/calibration laboratory or ISO 15189 for a medical laboratory are the appropriate standards. Suppliers seeking competent laboratory facilities should ensure that the facilities are accredited to the appropriate standard with a scope of accreditation appropriate for the specific conformity assessment task.

Benefits of accreditation

Accreditation is a tool for providing for the acceptance and recognition of testing and calibration results. Accreditation is now increasingly accepted worldwide as the most transparent and non- discriminatory mechanism to assure competency of laboratories.

- ❖ **To laboratories**, accreditation is a means of demonstrating competency to your client thus accuracy and reliability of results.
- ❖ **To regulators**, accreditation provides reliable and impartial basis for sound decision- making and risk management.
- ❖ **To consumers**, accreditation is your guarantee for reliable and comparable test/calibration results. It increases the reliability of products.
- ❖ **To industry and trade**, accreditation provides a competitive advantage, eliminates the need for repetitive testing thus facilitates trade.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on laboratory accreditation contact SADCAS on:

Headquarters

Southern African development Community Accreditation Service
Plot 50369 Unit 3A, Second Floor, Tholo Office Park Fairgrounds Office Park
Private Bag 00320, Gaborone, Botswana
Tel: +267 3132909/ 3132910/3188644/3188646
Mobile: +267 71250042, Fax: + 267 3132922
Email: info@sadcas.org
Website: www.sadcas.org

OR

The appropriate National Accreditation Focal Point based in the SADC Member States serviced by SADCAS. Refer to the SADCAS website www.sadcas.org for the contact details of National Accreditation Focal Point.

Delivering confidence, Assuring competency

