



IAF Policy Document



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Issue 6, Version 2

(IAF PL 6:2023)

The International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) facilitates trade and supports industry and regulators by operating a worldwide mutual recognition arrangement among Accreditation Bodies (ABs) in order that the results issued by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) accredited by IAF members can be accepted globally.

Accreditation reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited CABs are competent to carry out the work they undertake within their scope of accreditation. ABs that are members of IAF and their accredited CABs are required to comply with appropriate international standards and IAF mandatory documents for the consistent application of those standards.

ABs that are signatories to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) are evaluated regularly by an appointed team of peers to provide confidence in the operation of their accreditation programs. The structure of the IAF MLA is detailed in IAF PL 3 - Policies and Procedures on the IAF MLA Structure and for Expansion of the Scope of the IAF MLA. The scope of the IAF MLA is detailed in the IAF MLA Status document.

The IAF MLA is structured in five levels: Level 1 specifies mandatory criteria that apply to all ABs, ISO/IEC 17011. The combination of a Level 2 activity(ies) and the corresponding Level 3 normative document(s) is called the main scope of the MLA, and the combination of Level 4 (if applicable) and Level 5 relevant normative documents is called a sub-scope of the MLA.

- The main scope of the MLA includes activities e.g. product certification and associated mandated standards e.g. ISO/IEC 17065. The attestations made by CABs at the main scope level are considered to be equally reliable.
- The sub scope of the MLA includes conformity assessment requirements e.g. ISO 9001 and scheme specific requirements, where applicable, e.g. ISO 22003-1. The attestations made by CABs at the sub scope level are considered to be equivalent.

The IAF MLA delivers the confidence needed for market acceptance of conformity assessment outcomes. An attestation issued, within the scope of the IAF MLA, by a body that is accredited by an IAF MLA signatory AB can be recognized worldwide, thereby facilitating international trade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. OBJECTIVES	5
3. RIGHTS	6
4. OBLIGATIONS	6
5. ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MOU	8
6. DECISIONS THAT BIND MEMBERS OF IAF	9
7. VALIDITY OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING	9

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Memorandum of Understanding

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The organisations on behalf of which this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed are Members of the International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF).

1.2 IAF is an international association of organisations that have agreed to work together on a worldwide basis to achieve common trade facilitation objectives. IAF is a major world forum for developing the principles and practices for the conduct of conformity assessment that will deliver the confidence needed for market, regulatory and public acceptance of conformity assessment results. IAF acts through the accreditation of those bodies that perform conformity assessment such as management systems certification, product, process and service certification, certification of persons, verification/validation, or similar conformity assessment activities.

1.3 IAF is open to organisations, as defined in the Bylaws, that meet the requirements defined in the Bylaws and uphold the objectives of IAF and that are prepared to actively participate in the work of IAF, and which sign this MoU in accordance with the requirements of the Bylaws, as a declaration of their commitment to the objectives of IAF and the obligations of Members.

1.4 The primary function of IAF is to provide a single system which organisations with an accredited conformity assessment certificate in one part of the world use to have that certificate recognised everywhere else in the world. IAF seeks to achieve that function by promoting the international acceptance of accreditations granted by its signatory Accreditation Body Members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA), based on the equivalence of their accreditations. Admittance as signatory to the IAF MLA is contingent on successful peer evaluation in accordance with the IAF MLA Policies and Procedures.

1.5 Members of IAF have rights as set out in Section 3, and the Bylaws.

1.6 All Members shall sign the MoU. The signing of this MoU on behalf of an organisation commits the organisation to support the Objectives of IAF as set out in Section 2, to abide by the Obligations set out in Section 4, and to abide by the requirements of the IAF Bylaws.

1.7 The organisation and person making this declaration acknowledges that IAF may, in its discretion, admit to membership those organisations which have stated objectives compatible with this MOU, including the facilitation of efficient commerce between economies.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of IAF are to:

- i) ensure that accredited conformity assessment activities are effective in adding value to the facilitation of national, regional and global trade;
- ii) facilitate trade by –
 - a. promoting common application of the requirements for certification or similar schemes of conformity assessment;
 - b. promoting the equivalence of accreditations, granted by Accreditation Body Members that are signatories to the IAF MLA, that are covered by the Accreditation Body Members' scope of the MLA; and
 - c. providing technical assistance to economies that are developing an accreditation body;
- iii) establish and maintain confidence in the accreditation activities of Accreditation Body Members and in the activities of conformity assessment bodies accredited by them by:
 - a. participation by Accreditation Bodies and Regional Accreditation Groups in the IAF MLA;
 - b. exchange of information (subject to relevant requirements for confidentiality);
 - c. participation in IAF activities; and
 - d. participation in regional accreditation groups where they exist and where they are eligible to join;
- iv) support the implementation by accreditation and conformity assessment bodies of those normative documents which are endorsed by IAF;
- v) harmonise the application of criteria for accreditation, based on IAF endorsed normative documents, and publicly available IAF documents on the application of those normative documents;
- vi) establish and maintain an MLA based on the equivalence of accreditation verified through peer evaluation and/or re-evaluation among Accreditation Bodies, such that all parties have confidence in the declared equivalence;
- vii) promote the international acceptance of the MLA based on the equivalence of accreditation, and the international acceptance of accredited conformity assessment results granted by bodies accredited by Accreditation Body Members that are signatories to the IAF MLA, and covered by the scope of the MLA; and

- viii) open and maintain channels for the interchange of information and knowledge between Members and other relevant bodies.

3 RIGHTS

3.1 To achieve the aims and objectives of IAF, each Member has the right to:

- i) participate in meetings and activities organised on behalf of IAF, including the activities of its subordinate committees;
- ii) obtain non-confidential information about IAF Members; and
- iii) claim its membership status in the IAF.

4 OBLIGATIONS

4.1 All signatories to the MoU commit themselves to the pursuance of the objectives of IAF. In particular, each signatory of the MoU commits itself to:

- i) abide by the requirements of the IAF Bylaws as adopted by a vote of the Members of IAF;
- ii) conform with the rules and procedures of IAF as adopted by the Members voting in accordance with the rules in the Bylaws;
- iii) participate actively in the work, with an obligation to vote, for those eligible to do so, on all questions formally submitted for voting by IAF Members, to respond to surveys circulated to IAF Members and to participate in meetings. A summary of the voting record and survey responses by all Members will be made available to all Members on a continual basis;
- iv) support the world-wide acceptance of the IAF MLA between Accreditation Body Members that provide accreditation for the same standards and schemes;
- v) support the acceptance of the equivalence of the accreditations granted by signatories to the IAF MLA that are covered by the scope of the MLA;
- vi) support the acceptance of accredited conformity assessment results granted by bodies accredited by Accreditation Body Members that are signatories to the IAF MLA, and covered by the scope of the MLA;
- vii) prevent unauthorised disclosure of any confidential information gained within IAF;
- viii) pay all fees due to IAF in accordance with the Rules for IAF Membership Fees;

- ix) make available on request to IAF its rules, objectives, aims, membership and other documentation, as agreed from time to time; and
- x) ensure maintenance of understanding of IAF obligations within a Member organization following personnel changes.

4.2 Each Accreditation Body Member commits itself to:

- i) provide accreditation in conformity with relevant normative documents endorsed by IAF, and publicly available IAF application documents and policies on accreditation;
- ii) require the conformity assessment bodies it accredits for IAF endorsed standards or schemes to operate in accordance with the IAF documents on the application of endorsed normative documents for the provision of the conformity assessment;
- iii) seek signatory status of the IAF MLA for accreditation it provides within the scope of the IAF MLA, and accordingly subject itself to peer evaluation by other IAF Accreditation Body Members;
- iv) on becoming a signatory to the IAF MLA, maintain conformity with the policies and procedures of the MLA and recognise accreditations granted by other signatories to the IAF MLA as equivalent in all respects to its own accreditations covered by the scope of the MLA;
- v) make all of the normative documents relevant to its accreditation and over which it exercises control, available, at a fair and reasonable cost, for other Accreditation Body Members of IAF to adopt into their accreditation; and
- vi) make best efforts to continually identify and reduce those accreditation activities, such as accreditation assessment, which are duplicated with other Accreditation Body Members through utilization of one another's work.

4.3 Each Association Member commits itself to:

- i) conform, and require its members to conform, with IAF policies on accredited conformity assessment, IAF requirements on the use of Accreditation Body Member's symbols and the issuing of accredited conformity assessment certificates;
- ii) require its members, where appropriate, to abide by the normative documents endorsed by IAF and the relevant IAF application documents as the basis for the conformity assessment activities they provide.

4.4 Each Regional Accreditation Group Member commits itself to:

- i) develop and maintain its membership criteria for accreditation body members compatible with IAF requirements for accreditation body members;
- ii) require its accreditation body members to conform with relevant normative documents endorsed by IAF, and publicly available IAF application documents and policies on accreditation;
- iii) require the conformity assessment bodies its accreditation body members accredit for IAF endorsed standards and schemes to operate in accordance with the IAF documents on the application of endorsed normative documents for the provision of the conformity assessment;
- iv) seek signatory status of the IAF MLA for the scope of its own Regional Accreditation Group MLA that is within the scope of the IAF MLA, and accordingly subject itself to peer evaluation by other IAF Members;
- v) on becoming a signatory to the IAF MLA, maintain conformity with the policy and procedures of the IAF MLA and require its own Regional Accreditation Group MLA signatories to recognise accreditations granted by other signatories to the IAF MLA as equivalent in all respects to the accreditations of its own Regional Accreditation Group MLA signatories covered by the scope of the IAF MLA; and
- vi) make best efforts to continually identify and reduce the duplication and variation of its work with IAF through coordination of work with international relevance.

5 ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MOU

5.1 A Signatory to this MoU that does not continue to uphold its obligations under this MoU may have its signatory status of the MoU cancelled by action of the IAF General Assembly. Signatory status of the MoU may be terminated by decision by the IAF General Assembly if the actions of the Signatory are deemed to be detrimental to the objectives of this MoU or are deemed to bring the good name of IAF into disrepute.

5.2 A Member of IAF which has not paid the membership fees as required shall be sanctioned in accordance with the Rules for IAF Membership Fees.

5.3 A Member of IAF which has not fulfilled its obligation to vote on at least 2/3rds of ballots within a calendar year, shall be put on probation for 3 months, but that Member shall still be obliged to vote on ballots in the way that its vote shall be only counted as abstention no matter what position that Member has for the vote in order to demonstrate fulfilment of its voting obligations. Failure to meet the voting obligations over the probation period will result in suspension of its IAF membership for 3 months. When the membership is suspended, representatives of that Member shall not be permitted to speak in any IAF meeting(s), but that Member shall be still obliged to vote on ballots in the way that its vote shall be only counted as abstention no matter what position that Member has for the vote in order to demonstrate fulfilment of its voting obligations. All probations and suspensions will be made public on the IAF website. Any Member that fails to vote on any ballot while suspended may have its signatory status of the MoU cancelled by action of the IAF General Assembly upon action from the IAF Executive Committee.

6 DECISIONS THAT BIND MEMBERS OF IAF

6.1 Decisions that bind Members of IAF shall be made in accordance with the rules laid down in this MoU and the IAF Bylaws.

7 VALIDITY OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

7.1 This MoU may be amended only by a resolution of the Members having achieved a two-thirds majority in accordance with the voting rules in the Bylaws, provided that two months prior notice of the amendment has been given to all Members, together with relevant information.

7.2 If any Member intends to terminate its participation in this MoU and its membership in IAF, the Member shall notify the Chairman of IAF of its intention not later than three months prior to the intended termination date.

7.3 Questions of interpretation of this MoU shall be resolved by the Members of IAF in accordance with the voting rules in the Bylaws.

7.4 Certificates confirming the signing of this MoU on behalf of each Member shall be maintained by the IAF Secretary.

7.5 This MoU does not create any binding effect in domestic and international law but the signatories are expected to implement it in good faith.

End of IAF Policy Document - Memorandum of Understanding.

Further Information

For further Information on this document or other IAF documents, contact any member of IAF or the IAF Secretariat.

For contact details of members of IAF see the IAF website: <http://www.iaf.nu>

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