



PROCEDURE TO CONDUCT A JOINT PEER EVALUATION

CLASSIFICATION

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AVAILABILITY

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1. PURPOSE

Wherever appropriate and when requested, IAAC cooperates with other regional cooperations in the conduct of joint evaluations of accreditation bodies. The main body of this document outlines the general principles to be followed for the conduct of a joint evaluation with a regional accreditation cooperation.

Mutually agreed procedures with APAC are included as an Appendix.

2. INTRODUCTION

From time to time IAAC may be requested by either:

- other regional cooperation such as APAC or;
- an accreditation body member of other cooperation,

to cooperate in the conduct of a joint evaluation of an accreditation body that is a member of both cooperation bodies or has a contract of cooperation with one of the cooperation bodies while being a member of the other cooperation body. Wherever possible, IAAC will cooperate to enable IAAC participation in a requested joint evaluation.

3. REQUEST FOR COOPERATION

Any request for cooperation shall be sent to the Chair of the IAAC MLA Group who shall approve the request or, in non-routine cases, shall refer the request to the IAAC MLA Group, seeking its endorsement.

Note: Scheduled re-evaluations of accreditation bodies covered by the specific cases set out in the Appendix to this document are considered routine cases.

Consultation with the MLA Group shall be by email correspondence if the timing of the request is such that it cannot be dealt with during a meeting of the MLA Group. Records of the related MLA Group correspondence and decision shall be maintained by the IAAC Executive Secretariat.

4. CONDITIONS OF COOPERATION

Once the IAAC MLA Group has endorsed the request, the MLAG Chair (or, if delegated, the Secretary) shall advise the other cooperation body that IAAC will cooperate in the conduct of the joint evaluation with the following conditions applying:

- Except where otherwise allowed in the Appendix to this document, the procedures set out in IAAC MD 002 and IAAC MD 030 apply for the conduct of the evaluation;
- IAAC shall appoint an IAAC Lead Evaluator to be a member of the evaluation team, the IAAC Lead Evaluator shall be the Evaluation Team Leader;

NOTE: There may be occasions when the other cooperation body has more involvement with the applicant accreditation body, in which cases it would be more appropriate for the other cooperation body to provide the Team Leader.

- IAAC provides evaluators to cover all technical scopes covered by the (proposed) scope of recognition. Evaluators from the other cooperation body will generally be acceptable to IAAC only when the specific scope being evaluated is within the IAF or ILAC scope of recognition of an IAF or ILAC-recognised cooperation body;



- The other cooperation body shall provide their own qualified evaluators with competencies as required by the IAAC MLAG Group Chair. When the Team Leader is from the other cooperation body, IAAC shall attempt to provide evaluators with competencies as required by the other cooperation body;
- A failure by the other cooperation body to provide the names of appropriate evaluators at least 3 months prior to the scheduled date of the evaluation will lead to the evaluation reverting to an IAAC-only evaluation.

5. REVERSION TO IAAC-ONLY EVALUATION

The IAAC MLA Group Chair should identify possible “back-up” IAAC evaluators who can be used to complete the evaluation team in the event of the evaluation reverting to an IAAC-only evaluation.

When a joint evaluation reverts to an IAAC-only evaluation, the previously appointed IAAC Lead Evaluator shall assume the role of Team Leader.

When a joint evaluation reverts to an IAAC-only evaluation, IAAC shall notify the other cooperation body and the AB who solicited the joint evaluation about the evaluation becoming an IAAC-only evaluation.

APPENDIX A - PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCT OF JOINT APAC/IAAC EVALUATIONS

Introduction

The Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) and the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) have members who are signatories to both the IAAC MLA and the APAC MRA for the same or similar scopes of recognition. In such cases, and when requested by the member accreditation body (the AB), joint evaluations are conducted which produce a single evaluation report for independent consideration by the respective regional decision-making groups. These procedures, intended for use by IAAC and APAC evaluation team leaders and evaluation team members, describe the particular processes to be followed for conducting such a joint evaluation.

The main procedural points set out the general principles to be followed by representatives of both cooperations. The procedures are supplemented by “Notes” which reflect current or historical practice and are intended as a starting point, but the Notes may be modified by mutual consent of the Chairs of the APAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Group, the Lead Evaluator (LE) / Team Leader (TL) representatives for both co-operations, and the evaluated AB.

Procedures

1. It is the responsibility of the (applicant) accreditation body signatory to both the IAAC MLA and APAC MRA to inform the IAAC MLA Group Chair and the APAC MRA Council Chair at least two years in advance of the upcoming evaluation that a joint evaluation is requested. Any changes to the scope of the evaluation should be requested at this time.

Note: The MLA Group Chair typically appoints IAAC TLs approximately one or two years in advance of scheduled evaluations. The APAC MRA Council typically appoints APAC TLs approximately two years in advance of scheduled evaluations.

2. The Chairs of the IAAC MLA Group and the APAC MRA Council shall agree, in consultation with the AB, which cooperation will provide the TL for the joint evaluation. Once the appointment of the TL is confirmed by the appointing cooperation in accordance with its procedures, the Chair of the appointing Council/Group shall, in a timely manner, inform the Chair of the other Council/Group of the appointment.

Note: The APAC MRA Council has typically appointed TLs for their scheduled evaluations well in advance of the IAAC MLA Group Chair’s appointments. The IAAC MLA Group Chair has accepted the APAC TL appointments for their own purposes and thus APAC has provided TLs for the joint evaluations. In these cases, the APAC MRA Council Chair informs the IAAC MLA Group Chair of the TL appointment(s) once ratified by the APAC MRA Council.

3. The evaluation process to be followed by the evaluation team and the AB shall be based primarily on the documented procedures of the regional cooperation from which the TL has been appointed, unless otherwise mutually agreed between the AB and the TL. APAC MRA-001 and APAC MRA-009 (when remote evaluation is conducted) in the case of an APAC TL, or IAAC MD 002 in the case of an IAAC TL, shall be the base procedural document adopted, but in all cases the specific requirements of the complementary document shall be considered and addressed in an appropriate manner. The TL shall inform the AB which is the primary procedural document being used for the evaluation. Notwithstanding the above, the following shall be applied:

- (a) The key documentation provided by the AB to the evaluation team (e.g. in the APAC case, Set A as described in APAC FMRA-002, and in the case of IAAC it is described in IAAC FM 001, Item 18) shall be made available in English (as the official language

common to both cooperations). For re-evaluations, the IAAC procedures require the AB to provide the evaluation team with the documentation at least 3 months before the evaluation;

- (b) In accordance with IAAC MD 002, the TL and the evaluated AB shall agree on the language to be used during the on-site evaluation (i.e. English or Spanish) and determine the needs for translation assistance;
- (c) The evaluation report shall be in English.

Note: The evaluation procedures followed also include the use of relevant forms and templates. Many of these are very consistent between the two cooperations and are considered to be interchangeable.

4. If it is agreed that the APAC will provide the TL, the IAAC MLA Group Chair shall, in accordance with IAAC requirements set out elsewhere in this document (MD 002), appoint an IAAC LE to the team to effectively act as a 'Deputy TL', even if informally. The responsibilities of the IAAC LE associated with his/her formal appointment by the IAAC MLA Group Chair are to present the evaluation report to the IAAC MLA Group and to ensure that IAAC requirements in accordance with IAAC MD 002 are met throughout the evaluation process, including but not necessarily limited to:

- Ensuring, through the selection of IAAC Evaluators and Trainee Evaluators as Team Members (TM), adequate coverage on the IAAC scope of the evaluation (see Section 5 below);
- Ensuring an appropriate level of witnessing of the AB assessments for each of the IAAC scopes of recognition being evaluated;
- Mentoring IAAC Trainee Evaluators;
- Ensuring the evaluation report includes all elements required by IAAC MD 002;
- Ensuring recommendation from the evaluation team to the IAAC MLA Group includes all elements required by IAAC MD 002;
- Ensuring that all post-reporting activities required by IAAC MD 002 are undertaken, i.e. provision of documentation to the IAAC Executive Secretariat.

5. The selection of the evaluation team members shall be carried out in a co-operative and consultative manner between the APAC TL/LE and IAAC MLA Group Chair (with acceptance by the AB confirmed to each regional cooperation), ensuring all MRA/MLA scopes to be evaluated are adequately covered. Where a particular scope is unique to a particular cooperation, that cooperation shall provide the TM for that scope.

Note 1: Typically, APAC has appointed the TL, who, under APAC procedures, is responsible (in consultation with the APAC MRA MC Chair) for the selection of the evaluation TMs. The APAC TL should wait until the appointment of the IAAC evaluators as TMs has been confirmed, and then select APAC Evaluators/Provisional Evaluators based on the IAAC TMs at their respective scopes of competency to ensure the evaluation team has the necessary balance of competencies required. It is advisable that the APAC TL, soon after his/her appointment, establish lines of communication (via the APAC MRA MC Chair) with the IAAC MLA Group Chair and Executive Secretariat and provide an early indication of their preferred make-up of the evaluation team and invite appropriate TM appointments from IAAC.

Note 2: In the case that IAAC has appointed the TL, the IAAC MLA Group Chair, who under IAAC procedures, is responsible for the selection of the evaluation TMs, will designate the team in consultation with the appointed APAC LE ('Deputy TL').

6. Once the evaluation team and evaluation dates are agreed between all parties, the TL shall ensure the APAC and IAAC Secretariats are notified of the dates of the evaluation, the TMs and their respective assignments. The TL is then responsible for the conduct of the remainder of the evaluation process in accordance with the regional cooperation's procedures selected.
7. Should any logistical and/or procedural issues arise during the course of the evaluation that requires input from the APAC MRA MC Chair and/or IAAC MLA Group Chair, the TL shall ensure both Chairs are informed. Both Chairs shall work together to achieve a mutually acceptable resolution.

Note: There is no substitute for open and consultative communication between the AB, the TL, and the respective Chairs of the APAC MRA MC and IAAC MLA Group. All parties share the responsibility to ensure such communication is effective.

8. The final evaluation report, in English, shall be submitted to the APAC and IAAC Secretariats upon completion, along with a recommendation from the team to the APAC MRA Council and IAAC MLA Group. Where possible, a member of the evaluation team should be present when the report is considered by the respective cooperation's decision-making group.

Note 1: It would be expected that the recommendation to each of the decision-making group be broadly consistent in their overall conclusions/recommendations, but may often differ slightly because of differences in the scope of the evaluation for each and/or the differences in the content of the recommendation that is required by each cooperation.

Note 2: In the case of the IAAC MLA Group meeting, the TL or a TM should attend or participate virtually (e.g. via Zoom).

9. Throughout the evaluation process, and particularly with some of the post-on-site evaluation administrative processes, there will be different and/or additional functions required by each cooperation to be performed by the TL and TMs. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, feedback on evaluator performance by members of the evaluation team (APAC FMRA-008, IAAC PR 004), and answers to written questions on the evaluation report from members of the IAAC MLA Group prior to decision-making meetings. Every effort should be made to identify these in advance and implement accordingly, but all members of the evaluation team shall cooperate when requested to carry out activities required by either cooperation that would not normally be part of their own cooperation's procedures.

Other additional considerations are:

- (a) The TL may use the APAC or IAAC forms for the evaluation program and for the evaluation report. If the TL decides to use the IAAC process (e.g. using IAF/ILAC-A3 Template Report), he/she shall ensure, with the assistance and support of IAAC TMs, all requirements documents called up in the following IAAC forms are included:
 - IAAC FM 003 – Peer Evaluation Checklist
 - IAAC FM 004 Evaluation Program Template
- (b) The IAAC definitions of Nonconformities and Comments are identical as those used in IAF/ILAC-A2; however, IAAC requires a response to the Comments and has added some

notes about what type of information is required to close each type of finding (see IAAC MD 002, Annex 3, Section C).

- (c) IAAC has deadlines specified (IAAC MD 002, Annex 3) for responding to evaluation findings and for submitting the evaluation report to the IAAC MLA Group.
- (d) IAAC requires that the TL provide to the IAAC Executive Secretary the completed IAAC form *IAAC FM 022: List of Witnessed Assessments* by the APAC/IAAC evaluation team containing the list of assessments witnessed including identification of the CAB and the names of the assessors and experts. (APAC also has an identical requirement and APAC FMRS-012 can be used for this purpose.)

Note 1: The TL may download the IAAC forms from the IAAC website (www.iaac.org.mx) under the FM category of documents. All requirements documents are listed in the Mandatory Documents and Forms.

Note 2: "IAAC MD 30: IAF and ILAC Resolutions Applicable to IAAC Peer Evaluations" states some requirements and/or clarifications relevant to peer evaluations.

- (e) IAAC has a process to address an appeal submitted by an AB against the evaluation team's findings during the evaluation, which is described in IAAC PR 005 procedure for handling appeals and complaints, section 7. APAC does not have a process to handle an appeal during the evaluation. If the AB submits a formal appeal, IAAC shall handle the appeal according to the IAAC PR 005 procedure for handling appeals and complaints. The IAAC MLA Group Chair shall inform the APAC MRA Council Chair and the evaluation team of the appeal's results as agreed by IAAC.

10. The IAAC MLA Group and the APAC MRA Council shall make their respective decisions independently and in accordance with their respective procedures. However, if there is a pertinent matter discussed/concluded at the decision-making group that first considers the evaluation report and associated recommendation from the team, this should be brought to the attention of the other decision-making group when they consider the evaluation report and recommendations.

Such 'pertinent matters' would be when the decision-making group first considering the evaluation report does not accept the general recommendation from the team (e.g. does not grant/continue signatory status in one or more of the MRA/MLA scopes, particularly those scopes common to both regional cooperations; or when a shortened re-evaluation interval is decided). The Chair of the 'first' decision-making group and the TL shall agree which pertinent matters should be brought to the attention of the 'second' decision-making group, and on the mechanism for doing so. This could be through either the TL or another senior TM / 'Deputy TL' representing the 'second' regional cooperation (and who will be presenting the evaluation report and team recommendation to the 'second' decision-making meeting), and/or through the Chair of the 'second' decision-making group. Notwithstanding this sharing of information, regardless of any prior evaluation decision made, separate and distinct decisions are made by each of the decision-making groups.