



TPS 47

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UKAS Policy on Participation in Proficiency Testing

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 ISO/IEC 17025 requires laboratories to have quality control procedures for monitoring the validity of tests and calibrations undertaken. The monitoring may include participation in interlaboratory comparisons (ILCs) or proficiency testing programmes (PTs), but also by other means, eg, the regular use of certified reference materials or replicate tests/calibrations using the same or different methods. These methods provide a mechanism for a laboratory to demonstrate its competence to both its customers and the accreditation body.
- 1.2 UKAS considers participation in ILCs and PTs an important tool for demonstrating the technical competence of a laboratory.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This document relates to applicant and accredited testing laboratories. Accredited testing that is carried out as part of an Inspection Body process is also included.

3 TERMINOLOGY

- 3.1 *Proficiency Testing* (PT) is the determination of the calibration or testing performance of a laboratory by means of interlaboratory comparison.
- 3.2 *Interlaboratory comparison* (ILC) is the organisation, performance and evaluation of calibration/tests on the same or similar calibration/test items by two or more laboratories in accordance with predetermined conditions.

4 POLICY

- 4.1 It is UKAS policy that all accredited testing laboratories shall participate in PT/ILCs where such schemes are available and relevant to their scope of accreditation.
- 4.2 Laboratories are required to investigate scheme availability and also determine the appropriateness of the scheme.

Note 1: ISO/IEC 17025 requires laboratories to evaluate suppliers, this includes PT providers. ISO/IEC Guide 43: 1997, Part 1 and ILAC G13:2000 contain recommendations and guidance on the requirements for the operation of PT schemes. These documents should be used as a basis for such an evaluation. UKAS accredits PT Providers to ISO Guide 43; a list of accredited schemes/providers is available on www.ukas.com. UKAS recommends the use of an accredited scheme where one exists.

Note 2: Laboratories may refer to the EPTIS database for availability of PT Schemes. EPTIS is the European Proficiency Testing Information System sponsored by the European Commission and supported by European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), Eurolab and Eurachem. The website address is www.eptis.bam.de.

- 4.3 Laboratories must be prepared to justify their policy and approach to both frequency of participation and any non-participation in readily available PTs where one or more appropriate schemes exist.

Note 1: The frequency of participation should normally be as specified by the scheme. Laboratories will need to justify less frequent participation.

Note 2: The current EA/ILAC recommended minimum participation is one activity relating to each sub discipline of a laboratory's scope of accreditation within the period of two subsequent assessments (i.e. every 4 years).

- 4.4 Laboratories preparing for accreditation are required to participate in PT/ILCs where such schemes are available and relevant to their scope of application before accreditation can be granted.
- 4.5 Where no appropriate PT or ILC is available, laboratories are required to demonstrate the on-going validity of their tests by other means (use of CRMs, replicate testing, etc).
- 4.6 Laboratories are required to have appropriate acceptance criteria (normally those used by the scheme provider) and a procedure for investigating flagged (or anomalous) results and carrying out appropriate corrective/preventive actions. Laboratories are also required to monitor and review their on-going participation and performance and to monitor trends in results as appropriate.
- 4.7 UKAS may specify participation in a particular scheme/exercise where it is deemed necessary to demonstrate technical competence. Where participation in an externally run scheme is a mandatory requirement, this shall be stated in an appropriate UKAS publication (see UKAS publications list). Mandatory participation may be a requirement for some sector schemes or in support of regulatory activities.

5 REFERENCES

- 5.1 ISO/IEC 17025:1999 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.
- 5.2 ISO/IEC Guide 43-1:1997 Proficiency Testing by Interlaboratory Comparisons - Part 1: Development and Operation of Proficiency Testing Schemes.
- 5.3 EA-02/10 EA Policy for Participation in National and International Proficiency Testing Activities.
- 5.4 EA-03/04 Use of Proficiency Testing as a Tool for Accreditation in Testing.
- 5.5 ILAC G13: 2000 Guidelines for the Requirements of the Competence of Providers of Proficiency Testing Schemes.