

Quality World

November 2018

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FRONT-LINE TRANSFORMATION

How manufacturers are closing the skills gap



Securing the UK's quality culture

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), the UK's national accreditation body assessing the competence of conformity assessment organisations, has appointed a new CEO. Dina Patel speaks to Matt Gantley to find out his plans to develop new and innovative areas of accreditation to support enterprise, government, regulators and the public sector

Photos: Marcus Harvey



Over the past 20 years, Matt Gantley, the newly appointed CEO at UKAS, has developed a strong track record in delivering sustained strategic and commercial development of conformity assessment in both the UK and international markets. He has worked with organisations that are connected to or accredited by UKAS, which has provided him with the opportunity to benefit directly from the service UKAS provides, and the value UKAS creates in improving the national quality infrastructure. Now, Gantley tells *QW* about his plans for steering UKAS towards a strong, technology-enabled future. ►



QW: What did your previous role involve?

Matt Gantley: Before joining UKAS in September 2018, I was Managing Director of NQA and had previously held key commercial and international leadership positions in Ascertiva Group and Certsure.

At NQA I was responsible for providing a broad range of certification services that added value, improved business performance and delivered market trust.

I will be looking to continue this work at UKAS through deepening relationships with its customers and with government, and by continuing to innovate its products, services and improve the support to customers. I will be working closely with the conformity assessment industry and other quality infrastructure partners to expand the use of standards and accreditation, and to strengthen UKAS's role in facilitating international trade, supporting government trade and industrial policy and creating greater public trust and confidence in the products and services we consume in the UK.

QW: What is your remit and role at UKAS?

MG: UKAS has both a national and international role in facilitating trade and underpinning trust, confidence and credibility in products, services, schemes and personnel operating in both the private and public sectors. As CEO, my role is to ensure UKAS maintains its reputation for technical excellence and its key role as part of the UK's quality infrastructure to provide the accreditation services needed by consumers, businesses and government.

My job is to make sure that we have a long-term strategy, talented people with focused objectives, and that we benchmark externally to measure our performance in a balanced approach while building a long-term sustainable platform for the organisation. In delivering those objectives our business culture is key to success – making sure we have a culture of change, improvement, learning and development, especially customer service and continual quality improvement.

UKAS has a very strong culture. It's a culture based upon the highest technical standards and I hope to build upon that to help improve our overall productivity, customer service and quality. Similar to other organisations, we need to constantly look at the way we operate to make sure UKAS is effective and efficient. We have a government remit, as the sole national accreditation body, and that means we should check that we are efficient, productive and focused on the needs of our customer base and broader stakeholders. We also need to make sure we deliver our services in a timely and efficient manner and that we do it to the highest standards.

To achieve this, I will adopt some of the following core principles:

- Consistency at a policy and audit level;
- Constructive approaches to audit and findings;
- Competence of our people in all disciplines;
- Communication – clear and regular;
- Collaboration with major stakeholders;
- Culture that is agile and open to improvement.

We need to strive towards assuring consistency in the way we deliver our processes. This involves consistency among our teams, consistency in the accreditation process and consistency between our

back and front office operations. Competence is critical. We need to ensure we're competent in all aspects of our business, especially in areas where we interact with customers. For me, we also need to have excellent customer service. We need to ensure that we have good, competent people and we know what excellence looks like.

UKAS has worked hard in the past few years to improve communication and become more outward-looking while also improving internal communication across a broad organisation. We will continue to build on that.

QW: What are your current objectives at UKAS?

MG: Under the stewardship of my predecessor Paul Stennett, the UKAS executive team has already done an excellent job in establishing a proven strategy of continually improving customer service while simultaneously developing new and innovative areas of accreditation, which meet the needs of industry, public bodies and end users. I will continue to build on this work to ensure UKAS provides a great accreditation audit/experience, delivers on confidence and trust, and increases and improves the value and relevance of accreditation.

In my first month at UKAS, my priority has been to listen and learn about the culture at UKAS, and to meet my executive and senior management team to understand the business. My aim is to understand our current priorities for the future, to look at what we measure, how we measure it, our approach to customer service, productivity, financial performance, and skills.

My role is to ensure UKAS maintains its reputation for technical excellence and key role as part of the UK's quality infrastructure

I am looking forward to working with the UKAS team and key stakeholders to continue the drive to improve standards across the wide range of industries that UKAS serves. We delivered nearly 30,000 assessment days in the last financial year, a 9% increase on the previous year.

We granted over 1,500 extensions to scope for customers seeking to expand the coverage of their accreditation into new areas, up from 1,000 in 2017/18. The increased work has come both from well-established areas such as management system certification, forensic science, and medical laboratories, and from new schemes such as anti-bribery management systems, medical physics and clinical engineering, to aesthetic medicine.

We have a strong governance process in UKAS, as you'd expect from a government-sponsored organisation. We have a board, an active group of members, a policy advisory council and a wider policy advisory forum, who together guide the overall strategic direction.

The independent policy advisory council is made up of 12 members and they, alongside our main board and members, provide strong

governance for UKAS. Therefore, we need to consult with them on the strategic priorities and the scope, the shape and structure of UKAS going forwards.

QW: Do you have any plans to ensure continual improvement in technology and innovation into new areas of accreditation?

MG: The advancement of technology and its influence on society is already widely reported. This has a significant impact on accreditation, and the wider national quality infrastructure in how it adapts to existing and emerging trends in IT.

We are working to support the advances in technology, in particular data security, information security and cyber security. The number and sophistication of cyber security attacks is growing each year and so I can see this becoming one of the most important areas for UKAS in the future. The CQI has already done a lot of work in this area and should be commended for that.

UKAS is working on a project right now, that will be launched in the new year, to allow customers to use a portal to view their assessment programmes. UKAS is also beginning to explore new methodologies and technologies for remote auditing to enhance the delivery and integrity of the audit process.

We've seen that the general public is increasingly turning to internet sites like Amazon, TripAdvisor or Checkatrade for peer reviews. But we have also seen a number of recent media stories of fake reviews and manipulated reviews, and we need to work alongside the conformity assessment industry to support digital service providers to bring greater transparency, assurance and rigour to these processes.

QW: What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

MG: Being appointed CEO of UKAS is my greatest achievement, as it provides the best opportunity to influence quality management and its adoption both in the UK and across the world. Together with standards and conformity assessment, accreditation has the potential to make a real difference to all aspects of end users' lives by delivering confidence in the quality and safety of goods and services they procure.

I also take pride in the people that I've mentored and coached throughout my career. I'm a great believer in encouraging talent and giving people the opportunity to learn and grow. That is something I will certainly be focusing on – bringing new talent into the organisation and giving them the opportunity to show their skills and develop new skills to help UKAS evolve. One of the challenges we have in the quality industry is finding sufficient resources with the right balance of technical skills and interpersonal soft skills. To address this, we need to think about longer-term solutions including apprenticeships and graduate programmes.

QW: On 10 August, UKAS welcomed the publication of the UK government's first ever strategy to improve the UK's product safety regime. How will this publication affect UKAS?

MG: The Office for Product Safety and Standards is our primary government sponsor and one of UKAS's key partners in the UK's national quality infrastructure programme (UKQI). A robust quality ▶

UKAS timeline

1966

The British Calibration Service (BCS) was appointed to approve measurements.

1967

BCS established four measurement fields: Electrical –Direct Current and Low Frequency, Electrical – Radio Frequency and Microwave, Mechanical and Fluids, and Laboratory Approval Criteria.

1970

BCS was transferred to the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

1974

BCS was transferred to the responsibility of the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection (DPCP).

1977

The government relocated the organisation to the National Physical Laboratory (NPL).

1981

The testing scheme National Testing Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (NATLAS) was introduced by NPL to provide accredited certification. This scheme was the first introduction of a third party national scheme.

1983

BCS and NATLAS merged to form the National Measurement Accreditation Service (NAMAS).

Continued overleaf

infrastructure underpins confidence in the compliance and safety of goods and services, enabling trade on a global scale.

UKAS was therefore delighted that accredited conformity assessment was recognised in the recent report as playing an important role in delivering an effective product safety regime. UKAS is committed to working closely with accredited testing laboratories and product certification bodies to ensure that independent conformity assessment remains sufficiently rigorous, while being flexible enough to adapt to future product and industry developments.

Throughout the negotiations with the EU, for a future trade deal, we need to be mindful of the changes relating to the product safety infrastructure both in the UK and internationally.

QW: How will you continue to work with the UK government in the area of accreditation?

MG: UKAS is appointed as the UK's national accreditation body, and operates under a memorandum of understanding with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Although UKAS is an independent organisation, it has worked closely with the government since its inception to help it meet key policy objectives such as better regulation, good governance, fair markets and public confidence.

Through its work with BEIS, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Health and Safety Executive, Financial Services Authority and the Home Office, UKAS accreditation is widely recognised as helping the government meet its obligations in areas as diverse as healthcare, food production, energy supply, climate change and personal safety.

As both policy and industry develop, UKAS will continue to work closely with all government departments to ensure accreditation remains an effective, market-led and valuable tool that delivers policy objectives in a reliable and cost-effective way.

A large part of our current work with the government has been to ensure that Ministers and Officials dealing with Brexit are fully aware of the importance of accreditation to the national economy, and also to trade with the EU and internationally.



QW: How important is the relationship UKAS has with the CQI?

MG: UKAS values its relationship with the CQI, as both organisations have a deep-seated commitment to quality assurance. In addition to sharing Lord Jamie Lindsay as Chair, the alignment between the CQI and UKAS can be demonstrated through the joint work undertaken by both organisations. As well as helping shape last year's

/// Although we face a period of change and uncertainty in the UK, we can be clear that there will always be a need for a quality infrastructure ///

Good Governance Report, published by the Institute of Directors, both organisations have made a significant contribution to the Public Sector Assurance and Business Benefits websites, which set out to demonstrate the value of quality infrastructure to a global audience.

As a UKAS member, we also highly value the input that the CQI provides into UKAS's strategic and technical policy. We will continue to work closely with the CQI to promote a better understanding of the role of the UK Quality Infrastructure (standards, conformity assessment, the national measurement system and accreditation) to underpin confidence and assurance across the economic spectrum.

I've seen the pivotal role that quality plays in our economy, and it has never been more important for organisations to embed quality in everything they do. I'm looking forward to working with the CQI to promote strong governance, robust systems of assurance and continuous improvement.

QW: What are the implications of Brexit for UKAS, its customers and the businesses that rely on accredited services?

MG: Following the triggering of Article 50, UKAS has been proactive in ensuring that those within government dealing with Brexit are fully aware of the importance of accreditation to the national economy, and also to trade with the EU and internationally.

UKAS has been active

in lobbying and seeking clarity from ministers and officials in BEIS, the Department for Exiting the European Union, and the Department for International Trade.

UKAS has been seeking a post-Brexit environment in which UKAS's recognition as the UK National Accreditation Body continues under UK law; it continues to be a member of European Accreditation, the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation and the International Accreditation Forum. UKAS is also seeking a post-Brexit environment where mutual recognition of accreditation and accredited services is factored into any new trade agreements between the UK, the EU, and third countries.

As a result of this work, UKAS has been assured that its status as the national accreditation body will continue regardless of the outcome of the negotiations with the EU. The UK government has also confirmed that it is looking for a deal with the EU that will ensure that products only need to undergo one series of approvals to show they meet the required regulatory standards and that a comprehensive system of mutual recognition will be needed to achieve this.

Most recently, UKAS has sought clarity from the government on the recognition of UK notified bodies in the event of a no deal scenario. The recent government technical notice on the proposals for trading goods regulated under the new approach – if there is no Brexit deal – confirms that UKAS's role as the national accreditation

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body will remain the same. However, the paper suggests that a no deal Brexit could have a significant impact on the status of UK Notified Bodies, which needs to be addressed.

Although we face a period of change and uncertainty in the UK, as the process of withdrawal from the EU continues, we can be clear that there will always be a need for a quality infrastructure driven by third party conformity assessment backed by robust global recognised accreditation.

QW: What are the big opportunities and challenges ahead for the rest of the year and 2019?

MG: The external opportunities and challenges for UKAS include the world economy shifting East, the public loss of trust due to corporate malpractice, concerns surrounding consumer peer to peer reviews, cyber security and terrorism, technological and medical advances, and political uncertainty.

Internal opportunities and challenges include evolving standards, technology and the accessibility of resources.

I will work closely with the conformity assessment industry and other quality infrastructure partners to ensure that standards and accreditation remain fit for purpose as a tool to deliver trust, facilitate trade, solve government policy problems, and add real business value. ■

1995 NAMAS and the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies (NACCB) merged to form the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). UKAS was set up to operate under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the British Government.

2002 The first proficiency testing scheme provider was accredited.

2008 World Accreditation Day was launched.

2009 UKAS was appointed as the National Accreditation Body (NAB) by the Accreditation Regulations.

2010 UKAS acquired the Clinical Pathology Accreditation. It launched the Imaging Services Accreditation Scheme for the Royal College of Radiologists and the College of Radiographers.

2012 UKAS was appointed to deliver the Improving Quality in Physiological Services Programme.

2014 The Department of Health and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy recognised the role of accreditation in health and social care.

2016 The Public Sector Assurance website was launched to show how different tools help government officials and regulators deliver results.

2017 The Business Benefits website was launched to provide case studies and research papers to show how accredited conformity assessment is used internationally by central government, local government and regulators to deliver positive benefit.