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What is accreditation?

Find out how accreditation can help you deliver trust, innovation and contribute to a safer, healthier and easier world for people and organisations.



Accreditation is the formal recognition that an organisation is competent to perform specific processes, activities, or tasks in a reliable, credible and accurate manner.

Every aspect of daily life involves, at some level, adherence by someone to voluntary or mandatory standards. It is easy, perhaps, to think what some of these may be. Those related to food safety and labelling, for instance, or health and safety at work and in the home, weights and measures or trading standards.

The implementation of many standards may seem less relevant to our immediate existence but will nonetheless impact on our everyday life, such as those related to the structural integrity of building materials, reliability of health care, management systems, financial advice and reporting, or the manufacture of clothing.

Both standards and accreditation are primarily voluntary systems, but some aspects of accreditation are mandatory. In a number of areas it is therefore a requirement to obtain accreditation before offering certain services, in others it is a de facto 'license' to trade in as much as key purchasers expect suppliers to hold it.

Accreditation is not simply a mechanism for demonstrating compliance and conformity however;

it provides market differentiation and objective proof that an organisation complies with best practice. The process of seeking and maintaining accreditation is often invaluable in identifying improvements and efficiencies in policies and processes which can ultimately result in reduced overheads and running costs. A 2013 University of Birkbeck study concluded that accreditation contributed around £1bn to the UK economy each year.

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Accreditation underpins practical applications of an increasingly wide range of activities across all sectors of the economy.

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UKAS accreditation is recognised and accepted globally, reducing technical barriers to international trade



Improved organisational efficiency

Accreditation can highlight gaps or weaknesses in operational capability, thereby providing the opportunity for improved organisational efficiency and outputs.

Competitive advantage

Accreditation provides independent assurance of technical competence; it can set you apart from the competition.

Accreditation supports the generation of new business, providing the potential to open up trade into new markets.



Survey results

of those that responded:

+ **93%** agreed that accreditation provides confidence to their customers and stakeholders

+ **76%** agreed that accreditation differentiates them from their competitors

+ **85%** agreed that accreditation improves the quality and validity of their work

+ **71%** agreed that accreditation helps them to win new or maintain existing business

Supply chain confidence

Accreditation can create confidence in industry supply chains and is often specified by public and private sector organisations as a prerequisite for acceptance.

UKAS accreditation provides confidence to employees, customers and stakeholders of a commitment to quality and service improvement



Manage risks

Accreditation can be an important factor in assessing, identifying and reducing risks.

Benefits of being UKAS accredited

Accreditation brings business benefits and other advantages to many groups of people.

For central and local government

Accreditation (rather than regulation) is the preferred mechanism for ensuring public confidence in the reliability and integrity of activities that impact on health, welfare, security and the environment. This is because accreditation:

- + reduces the need for central government and local authorities to employ their own specialist assessment personnel and the associated cost burden;
- + offers a single, transparent and repeatable approach.

Accreditation stimulates competition in the marketplace and provides a framework to fuel innovation and creativity.

Accreditation fulfils the requirement to reduce trade barriers and ensures the competitiveness of our exports, as well as the integrity of imports to the UK.

For accredited organisations

In a number of areas it is a requirement to obtain accreditation before offering certain services; in others it is a de facto 'licence' to trade in that key purchasers expect it.

Accreditation provides market differentiation and objective proof that an organisation complies with best practice. It is the internationally-recognised system that is used to develop and sustain high standards of performance. It is a winning formula for eligibility to tender and for international trade.

For consumers

Accreditation gives consumers confidence in an increasingly complex, dynamic and global marketplace by ensuring consistently high standards in the quality of products or services purchased.

For business

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Why do you need accreditation?

Accreditation delivers confidence in report, certificates and conformity statements. It underpins the quality of results by ensuring their traceability, comparability, validity and commutability.

More and more businesses are voluntarily choosing the accreditation route as they recognise the internal efficiencies that it brings and the opportunities to demonstrate product performance.

Accreditation helps to:

Make life safer, healthier and easier for people, organisations, and enterprises all over the world

Facilitate communication and trade



Provide organisations with essential tools for decision-making and risk management



Enable innovation in the private and public sectors

Build business and public trust

Can you become accredited?

Assessments against recognised standards can be carried out for organisations that:

- + Make professional judgement in processes of testing, inspection and certification.
- + Implement processes that require highly professional skills crucial for making critical decisions (for example, policy making on trade issues, medical treatment, environmental impact, etc.).
- + Assign values to products upon which results are being based (reference materials, calibration, proficiency testing) and which involves professional judgement and skill.
- + Evaluate processes that are critical for customers and stakeholders who do not have the professional knowledge to evaluate safety-critical inspections (for example, in the fields of medical testing, public health, public safety, environmental control, safety assessments, etc.).
- + Implement processes subject to strong competitive forces that a government or client (as a protector of the people) would like to formally oversee to ensure a 'level playing field'.

With an increase in specified standards has come a growth in the number of organisations whose business it is to check conformity and compliance with these standards by providing services such as:

- + testing
- + inspection
- + calibration
- + certification

These evaluating organisations may be laboratories, inspection bodies, certification bodies or other types of organisation.

Accreditation is a means of assessing, in the public interest, the technical competence and integrity of the organisations offering these kinds of evaluation services.



5 steps to accreditation

If you are based in the UK and provide testing, certification, calibration, inspection or validation & verification services, you will find UKAS accreditation will help improve quality, efficiency, access to global markets, customer confidence and new business acquisition.

1

+ Obtain the relevant standard

You can purchase international standards from the BSI website. Familiarise yourself with the clauses and conduct a gap analysis. Supporting publications can be found on the UKAS website and preparation for accreditation courses and webinars are available from the UKAS Training Academy.

2

+ Apply for accreditation

Contact UKAS to apply for accreditation. We will guide you through the process and are here to answer all your questions. Once your application is submitted and your fee is paid, the assessment process can begin.

3

+ Assessment

Your UKAS Assessment Manager (AM) will support and guide you through the process and can conduct a pre-assessment to identify gaps and help prepare. Your AM will review procedures and records, meet your team and monitor how you operate to relevant standards.

4

+ Results

Your AM will talk you through the results of your assessment and provide a report that highlights good work as well as any areas for improvement. You will have 12 weeks to provide evidence that necessary improvements have been made prior to the grant of accreditation.

5

+ Grant of accreditation

Once successful, your grant of UKAS accreditation will be awarded and you will receive your welcome pack and certificate. You can use the UKAS symbols on your website, stationery and tenders. If you trade overseas, you can also use the ILAC or IAF mark to signal global acceptance.



Take the first step to UKAS accreditation,
call or email us to find out how.

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