

Do you commission the testing of your consumer products? Do you need to ensure quality and safety through the test results?

UKAS accreditation ensures that consumers, suppliers, purchasers and specifiers can have confidence in the quality and safety of goods and in the provision of services throughout the supply chain.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the sole accreditation body recognised by Government to assess, against internationally recognised standards, organisations that provide testing services. UKAS has formally been appointed as the National Accreditation Body for the United Kingdom under the Accreditation Regulation 2009 (S.I. 3155). The Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) works with UKAS to ensure that it operates in the public interest and meets the obligation imposed by the Regulation.

There are well over 1000 UKAS accredited testing laboratories in the UK in a wide range of sectors such as: food and food production, water, toy and childcare products, healthcare, paper and packaging. UKAS combines a depth of technical knowledge and expertise



built up over many years with sector-specific scientific and technical specialists used to assess laboratories.

UKAS laboratory accreditation uses criteria and procedures specifically to determine technical competence. Laboratory accreditation uses the internationally recognised standard ISO/IEC 17025 (general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories) to assess factors relevant to a laboratory's ability to produce high quality test results. UKAS is the only UK accreditation body that can legitimately claim to accredit to ISO/IEC 17025.



International Perspective

Under the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed by BEIS on behalf of the government, UKAS is a Signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) which is the global authority of laboratory accreditation. ILAC, which ensures that all laboratories are assessed to the same principles, operates a Multilateral Arrangement (MRA) which covers over 80 economies worldwide. This Arrangement creates mutual confidence in, and acceptance of, accredited test reports from overseas.

For UK food retailers and producers, the MRA provides confidence that produce imported from overseas that is tested by an accredited body, has been assessed against the same standards and criteria. This removes the need to carry out re-testing and therefore lowers the cost and time to assure the quality of imported produce.



Why you should use a UKAS accredited testing laboratory?

The competence of a laboratory you appoint may be crucial to maintaining your reputation as a responsible organisation. It is therefore surprising that organisations are still tempted to use the service of laboratories whose competence has not been confirmed by a fully independent, authoritative third party with appropriate recognition.

There are a host of reasons why you should use a UKAS accredited testing laboratory.

Here are some of the most important:

Minimise risk – While risk can never be removed altogether, employing the services of a UKAS accredited laboratory means choosing a technically competent laboratory and minimising the risk of producing or supplying test results that are not valid or reliable. A UKAS accredited testing laboratory is able to demonstrate a full audit trail for the testing.

Keep your reputation – Confidence in your product is enhanced if clients know it has been thoroughly evaluated by an independent, competent testing facility. Increasingly customers are relying on independent evidence, rather than simply accepting a supplier's word that the product is fit for purpose.

Demonstrate credibility – A UKAS accredited testing laboratory can call upon best practice within its sector and will only use the services of trained and experienced evaluators.

Defend against litigation – The use of a UKAS accredited laboratory body is a powerful demonstration that you have exercised all due diligence in the selection and appointment of a supplier. You can also be held liable for any failure of your product, particularly if it involves public safety or financial loss to a client.

Government has published advice for businesses using accredited services: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accreditation-andconformity-assessment-guidance-forbusiness-and-government-departments>

The accreditation process

UKAS carries out surveillance assessments of all accredited organisations annually with a full reassessment every four years. This assessment and accreditation process involves reviewing by an independent decision maker the competence of those involved, and the conduct and reporting of the assessment. Assessments are carried out by competent UKAS assessment managers and external technical assessors who have the knowledge and experience to conduct the visit.

Further information:

Further information on UKAS can be found at: <https://www.ukas.com/sectors/food-safety/>

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