



# Why choose a UKAS accredited supplier?



Choosing a UKAS accredited supplier for your conformity assessment needs means you can have confidence in your supplier's ability to meet your needs and deliver their services with competence, impartiality and independence in accordance with recognised international standards and best practice.

Using a UKAS accredited organisation as a supplier is a key step in ensuring confidence in your supply chain. There are a few things you may want to consider to be sure you are making exactly the right choice for your business.

## Check the organisation's UKAS Schedule of Accreditation

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Organisations are not always accredited for every service they provide. The UKAS Schedule of Accreditation provides the details of the technical activities that an organisation is accredited to perform so check that the service you need is listed as accredited before you make your final decision.

When requesting laboratory services, such as testing or calibration, check the organisations Schedule of Accreditation to ensure that they are accredited for the analytical range and uncertainty of measurement (calibration only) you require.

## Check your contractual documentation with the supplier

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Make sure you are getting a UKAS accredited service. Some organisations offer similar unaccredited services so specify upfront that you require UKAS accredited services.

## Know the difference between accreditation and certification

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In short, accreditation determines the technical competence of an organisation whereas, certifications such as ISO 9001, focus on requirements for a quality management system. Organisations that provide conformity assessment services can have accredited certification to ISO 9001 for their quality management systems, but this should not be interpreted to mean that the organisation has demonstrated the technical competence to produce valid and accurate evaluations. In this case, UKAS accreditation is the only way to be confident that your supplier is technically competent.

Once you've chosen your UKAS accredited supplier, we advise that you regularly check their accredited status via [our website](#) to make sure they are maintaining that accreditation.

# Frequently asked questions

## When does UKAS accreditation expire?

UKAS accreditation is granted for a 4-year period. During this time, annual assessments are conducted in order to confirm ongoing competence and maintain accreditation. In year 4 of the accreditation cycle a full reassessment is automatically conducted, leading to renewal of accreditation for a further 4-year period. However, it should not be assumed that an organisation's accreditation will remain valid until the expiry date.

Accreditation can be suspended or withdrawn by UKAS at any point, for part or all of the scope, if conformity with the relevant standards is not maintained. So it should not be assumed that an organisation's accreditation will remain valid until the expiry date. Therefore, expiry dates should not be a deciding factor when selecting an accredited supplier.

## When are UKAS accreditation certificates reissued?

UKAS accreditation certificates are only reissued in the following situations:

- + Name of the accredited organisation changes;
- + Standard to which the organisation is accredited changes;
- + Other information present on the certificate needs to be updated; including the addition or withdrawal of accredited activities
- + UKAS updates the format or branding of the certificate.

You should not expect your supplier to send you a new certificate upon renewal of accreditation. Alongside the accreditation certificate, the schedule of accreditation is published on the UKAS website, defining the accredited scope. The schedule, unlike the accreditation certificate, is updated as and when any changes to scope occur.



## What does the term flexible scope on a Schedule of Accreditation mean?

In some sectors, or for some services, organisations need their accreditation to be flexible to handle issues such as the rate of change in technical standards or the pace of introduction of new products to the market. In these cases, UKAS assesses the competence of an organisation to manage the introduction of new or amended methods. Where competence is demonstrated, they are granted a flexible scope of accreditation. A flexible scope does have clearly defined boundaries and therefore does not give the organisation the ability to provide services outside of those boundaries under its accreditation. However, if the service you require falls within the boundaries of the flexible scope you can be confident you will be receiving a UKAS accredited service.

## My supplier is accredited but not by UKAS, is their accreditation valid?

Possibly. Within the UK, the Government has stated that accreditation of UK companies will only be recognised if it has been awarded by the UK's appointed national accreditation body, i.e. UKAS. However, the policy goes on to also recognise accreditation of non-UK companies granted by overseas accreditation bodies. For this accreditation to be recognised it must be awarded by an accreditation body that is a signatory to international Multi-Lateral Agreements (MLA) or Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA). UKAS is a signatory to the international MLA and MRA operated by EA, IAF and ILAC.

If your supplier is accredited by a signatory to the EA MLA, the IAF MLA (for Certification or Validation and Verification) or ILAC MRA (for all other types of conformity assessment), then you can be assured that the accreditation is recognised as equivalent to that awarded by UKAS.

If the accreditation body is not listed for the relevant MLA/MRA scope then it is not internationally recognised, and you cannot have the same level of confidence in the competence, impartiality and independence of the supplier as you can if it was UKAS accredited.

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