
Standard Practice for

**Accreditation Bodies Operating in
the Fields of Construction
Materials Testing and Inspection**

AASHTO Designation: R 89-18 (2022)¹

First Published: 2018

Reviewed but Not Updated: 2022

Technical Subcommittee: 5c, Quality Assurance and Environmental



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1. SCOPE

- 1.1. This practice describes the requirements for accreditation bodies that evaluate and accredit agencies that perform construction materials testing and inspection. The requirements apply to the assessment and administration activities of the accreditation body.
- 1.2. The accreditation method described in this standard requires the direct demonstration of testing and inspection activities and the detailed examination of any equipment associated with such activities during assessments, whenever possible.

2. REFERENCED STANDARDS

- 2.1. *AASHTO Standard:*
 - [R 18](#), Establishing and Implementing a Quality Management System for Construction Materials Testing Laboratories
- 2.2. *ASTM Standards:*
 - [C1077](#), Standard Practice for Agencies Testing Concrete and Concrete Aggregates for Use in Construction and Criteria for Testing Agency Evaluation
 - [C1093](#), Standard Practice for Accreditation of Testing Agencies for Masonry
 - [C1222](#), Standard Practice for Evaluation of Laboratories Testing Hydraulic Cement
 - [D3666](#), Standard Specification for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Testing and Inspecting Road and Paving Materials
 - [D3740](#), Standard Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction
 - [E329](#), Standard Specification for Agencies Engaged in Construction Inspection, Testing, or Special Inspection
- 2.3. *ISO/IEC Standards:*
 - 17020, Conformity Assessment — Requirements for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection
 - 17025, General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories
 - 17043, Conformity Assessment — General Requirements for Proficiency Testing

3. SIGNIFICANCE AND USE

- 3.1. The members of AASHTO and other governmental authorities implement laws and regulations covering the approval of materials, products, and services used in the construction, maintenance, and repair of transportation, building, and public works systems. Similarly, in the private sector, purchasers authorizing construction activities develop and implement specifications describing conformity assessment systems.
- 3.2. These authorities and purchasers develop and implement systems for approval aimed at achieving a minimum level of quality in materials and competence in services provided. Such a system should enable comparability, and also ensure competition on equal terms between those agencies that would seek to provide testing and inspection services in support of such activities.
- 3.3. In order for authorities and purchasers to confidently assess the capabilities of testing and inspection agencies, it is desirable to rely on an accreditation body that can provide an unbiased, thorough, and objective assessment of a testing and inspection agency's capabilities. Accreditation should provide confidence to the authority or purchaser that an agency performing tests or inspections is competent to do so.
- 3.4. The use of this standard will facilitate the evaluation of comparability between different accreditation and assessment bodies providing accreditation and assessment services.
- 3.5. Accreditation is often confused with other terms that are related, such as certification, validation, and qualification. Accreditation applies to an agency as opposed to certification, which generally applies to people or products. Likewise, qualification or validation generally refers to a process specified by a governmental body (or other authority) that may include accreditation, but is specific to the requirements of that body for the specified purpose.

4. TERMINOLOGY

- 4.1. *Definitions:*
- 4.1.1. *accreditation*—third-party attestation of an agency's formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific tasks.
- 4.1.2. *accreditation body*—authoritative body that performs the act of third party recognition to agencies.
Discussion—A typical accreditation body provides the assessment and evaluation of corrective actions following an assessment. However, some accreditation bodies allow for multiple assessment bodies to provide assessments that are then used as the basis for their accreditation decisions.
- 4.1.3. *agency*—an organization that performs testing or inspection services that can be the object of accreditation.
Discussion—Agency is typically what the international accreditation community refers to as a conformity assessment body (CAB).
- 4.1.4. *appeal*—request by an agency for reconsideration of an adverse decision made by the accreditation body related to its desired accreditation status.
Discussion—Adverse decisions might include decisions to deny, suspend, or revoke accreditation or to refuse service.

- 4.1.5. *assessment*—process undertaken by an accreditation body to evaluate the competence of an agency, based on particular standard(s) for a defined scope of accreditation
Discussion—Evaluations may include desktop reviews of quality management systems, on-site assessments, proficiency sample testing, and reviews of personnel qualifications.
- 4.1.6. *assessment body*—organization that provides assessment services that are used as the basis for accreditation.
- 4.1.7. *assessor*—individual assigned by an accreditation or assessment body, alone or as part of an assessment team, to assess conformance of an agency to a defined scope of standards and requirements.
- 4.1.8. *authority*—an independent entity, apart from the agency being evaluated or the accreditation body, that uses or relies upon the services of an agency (or agencies) and uses accreditation as a tool to verify the quality and competence of that agency (or agencies)
Discussion—Authorities can be governmental bodies, businesses or private interests (owners, purchasers, specifiers) with an interest in requiring the use of conformity assessment and accreditation services. Governmental bodies such as national, state, county, and local governments may use accreditation to determine the competence of services used in publicly funded projects. Businesses or private interests may use accreditation to determine the same for services used in privately funded projects.
- 4.1.9. *complaint*—expression of dissatisfaction to an accreditation body, other than an appeal, by any person or organization, relating to the activities of that accreditation body or of an accredited agency, where a response is expected.
- 4.1.10. *conformity assessment*—an evaluation activity that determines if a process or service conforms to standard specifications and fulfills relevant requirements.
- 4.1.11. *consultancy*—the act of an accreditation body taking actions to fulfill requirements of the quality management system on behalf of the agency being evaluated
Discussion—Examples of consultancy include, but are not limited to (1) participating in the operation or management of the agency’s quality management system; (2) preparing or revising manuals, procedures, or records; or (3) providing specific solutions to resolve nonconformities.
- 4.1.12. *interested parties*—organizations that have a direct or indirect interest in accreditation.
Discussion—Agencies evaluated by the accreditation body and agencies that require accreditation have a direct interest in the quality and outcomes of the accreditation process.
- 4.1.13. *revocation*—action taken by an accreditation body to remove accreditation for all or part of the scope of accreditation.
Discussion—Revocation generally occurs when the accreditation body determines that an agency has not conformed to the requirements of accreditation. Revocation can occur for many reasons including, but not limited to: (1) inability or failure to resolve assessment deficiencies; (2) non-participation in assessments and/or proficiency testing programs; or (3) non-payment of accreditation or assessment fees.
- 4.1.14. *related body*—A related body is a separate legal entity that is linked by common ownership or contractual arrangements to the accreditation body
Discussion—A related body may be a division, group, or other organizational component of the accreditation body that is not directly involved in the accreditation process or can be another organization closely related to or associated with the activities of the accreditation body.

- 4.1.15. *remote assessment*—an assessment conducted by the accreditation body without visiting the physical location of the agency.
Discussion—Remote assessments are often used to conduct document review and review of proficiency testing results.
- 4.1.16. *scope of accreditation*—The categories or fields of testing under which standards or requirements are included in the published directory listing of a laboratory’s accreditation
- 4.1.17. *specifier*—An entity that requires a testing or inspection agency to maintain accreditation
- 4.1.18. *subcontractor*—An entity used to perform assessment activities for the accreditation body
- 4.1.19. *surveillance*—a set of activities initiated by an accreditation body to monitor the continued fulfillment of accreditation requirements.
- 4.1.20. *suspension*—action taken by an accreditation body to temporarily make accreditation invalid for all or part of the scope of accreditation.
- 4.1.21. *technical expert*—a member of the assessment team who provides experience or knowledge to assist the assessor in determining conformance in the subject area under assessment.
- 4.1.22. *virtual assessment*—an assessment conducted using streaming video and audio technologies.
Discussion—Virtual assessments are useful for monitoring implementation of corrective actions or making minor changes to the scope of an existing accreditation.
- 4.1.23. *withdrawal*—action taken by an accredited agency to voluntarily reduce the scope of its accreditation.

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1. *Legal and Organizational Requirements:*

- 5.1.1. The accreditation body shall be a registered legal entity. The accreditation body shall document its legal status including the names of those persons who control it. Persons who control the accreditation body may include board members, owners or other entities that provide direct oversight of the accreditation body’s activities.
- 5.1.2. The accreditation body shall have authority and shall be responsible for its decisions relating to accreditation.
- 5.1.3. The accreditation body shall document its entire organizational structure, showing lines of authority and responsibility.
- 5.1.4. The accreditation body shall document the duties and responsibilities of top management and other personnel associated with the accreditation body who could affect the quality of the accreditation and the decision making process.
- 5.1.5. The accreditation body shall describe the procedure for the management and operation of any committees or boards that are involved in the accreditation process, including selection criteria, terms of service and responsibilities of the board and/or committee members. The accreditation body shall document participation on such boards and committees including the names and affiliations of those participating.

5.2. *Impartiality Requirements:*

- 5.2.1. The accreditation body shall be organized and operated in a manner so as to safeguard the objectivity and impartiality of its activities. The management of the accreditation body shall demonstrate a commitment to impartiality.
- 5.2.2. The accreditation body shall identify, evaluate, manage, and document risks to impartiality and objectivity of the accreditation activities. Where risks are present, the accreditation body shall minimize risk to the point of acceptability. If the risk is deemed to be unacceptable, accreditation services shall not be provided.
- 5.2.3. The accreditation body shall document and implement a structure that provides opportunity for effective involvement by interested parties of the accreditation body. This structure is intended to safeguard impartiality and develop and maintain the principles and major policies of operation of its accreditation system.
- 5.2.4. The accreditation body shall make its services available to all applicants regardless of their size, affiliation, or number of testing and inspection agencies already accredited. Any limitations on the offering of services shall be documented.
- 5.2.5. All accreditation body personnel and committees that could influence the accreditation process shall act objectively and be free from any undue commercial, financial, and other pressures that could compromise impartiality.
- 5.2.6. The accreditation body shall ensure that each decision on accreditation is made by competent person(s) or committee(s) different from those who carried out the assessment.
- 5.2.7. The accreditation body shall not provide any service that affects its impartiality, such as those services performed by agencies that are included in the scope of accreditation offered by the accreditation body.
- 5.2.8. The accreditation body's activities shall not be linked with outside interests, persons or corporate bodies that might offer services for the purpose of helping an agency obtain accreditation. The accreditation body shall not state or imply accreditation would be simpler, easier, faster, or less expensive if any specified person(s), consultant firm, or commercial product were used.
- 5.2.9. The accreditation body shall ensure that the activities of its related bodies do not compromise the confidentiality, objectivity, and impartiality of its accreditations. The accreditation body, with the assistance of the interested parties, shall identify, analyze and document the relationships with related bodies to determine the potential for conflict of interest, whether they arise from within the accreditation body or from the activities of the related bodies. Where conflicts are identified, appropriate action shall be taken.
- 5.3. *Confidentiality Requirements:*
- 5.3.1. The accreditation body shall have adequate arrangements to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained in the process of its accreditation activities at all levels of the accreditation body, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf.
- 5.3.2. The accreditation body shall not disclose confidential information about a particular agency outside the accreditation body without documented consent of the agency, except where the law requires such information to be disclosed without such consent.
- 5.4. *Liability and Financing Requirements:*
- 5.4.1. The accreditation body shall have arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its activities.