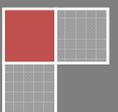


2017

AFRAC POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR A MUTUAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT (MRA) AMONG ACCREDITATION BODIES AFRICAN ACCREDITATION COOPERATION

The document defines the policies and procedures of AFRAC to establish, maintain and extend an MRA among accreditation bodies that are signatories to the AFRAC MRA.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document provides the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) with general requirements and procedures for evaluating single and multi-economy Accreditation Bodies (ABs) for the purpose of qualifying them to sign applicable Arrangement(s).

1.2 Scope

This document identifies requirements and procedures for evaluation by AFRAC of a single or multi-economy accreditation body. Section 3 includes a flowchart with harmonized procedures. There are six annexes to describe in more detail the major steps of the process.

Note: This document has been based on IAF/ILAC A2.

1.3 Definitions

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply:

- 1.3.1 *Accreditation Body (single or multi economy AB):* An organization that operates an accreditation system for one or more types of conformity assessment bodies.
- 1.3.2 *Accreditation scheme:* rules and procedures specified in a standard or normative document included in AFRAC Arrangements that address the process for the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (Level 3).
- 1.3.3 *Arrangement:* The AFRAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA).
- 1.3.4 *Arrangement Group:* All signatories to the AFRAC MRA Arrangement.
- 1.3.5 *Decision Making Group:* A body that decides on the status of membership of an Arrangement (i.e. the AFRAC MRA Council).
- 1.3.6 *Deputy Team Leader (DTL):* A person assigned to assist the TL in planning, preparing and managing the evaluation.
- 1.3.7 *Evaluation Team Leader (TL):* A person responsible for leading a team in the evaluation of an accreditation body.
- 1.3.8 *Evaluation Team Member (TM):* A person serving on a team in the evaluation of an accreditation body.
- 1.3.9 *MRA Committee:* The committee responsible for planning and managing the implementation and maintenance of AFRAC's Mutual Recognition Arrangement.
- 1.3.10 *MRA Council:* All signatories to the AFRAC Arrangement. The MRA Council decides on and manages membership of the AFRAC Arrangement.
- 1.3.11 *Peer Evaluation:* A structured process of evaluation of an accreditation body by representatives of accreditation bodies.
- 1.3.12 *Proficiency Testing Activity:* All those activities of comparisons of tests, calibrations & inspections between laboratories/inspection bodies and used by accreditation

bodies to assess performance, including proficiency tests (refer to ISO/IEC 17043) interlaboratory comparisons and measurement audits conducted by Regional Groups, accreditation bodies, commercial organizations, or other providers (see ILAC P9).

- 1.3.13 *Standard*: A standard or other normative documents related to accreditation and conformity assessment bodies.
- 1.3.14 *Signatory*: A Member of AFRAC who has signed the AFRAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement.
- 1.3.15 *Witnessing*: Observation of an AB carrying out assessment at the premises of the conformity assessment body (CAB), and evaluating the AB's management system and records by an evaluation team. (It may also include observing the AB's staff preparing for an assessment and dealing with assessment reports.)

SECTION 2: REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ACCREDITATION BODY

2.1 Requirements

- 2.1.1 An accreditation body shall comply with the provisions of ISO/IEC 17011 requirements and mandatory documents in IAF and ILAC where applicable.
- 2.1.2 An accreditation body shall also comply with relevant supplementary requirements (see Clause 2.2) and any applicable AFRAC requirements.

2.2 Supplementary requirements

2.2.1 An accreditation body shall:

- 2.2.1.1 Have demonstrated experience in the assessment of its accredited conformity assessment bodies (CAB) and have carried out and granted at least one accreditation that is valid at the time of the evaluation in each of the scopes of the Arrangement for which it applies;

NOTE: This experience may be obtained by having accredited at least one CAB in a particular scope (Level 3) and having carried out an onsite assessment activity and reassessment of the CAB.

For Certification additional level 4 and/or 5 extensions under the same level 3 scope will be granted on the basis of AB self-declaration that the level 4/5 scope has been introduced and relevant requirements as defined by AFRAC and IAF have been met. The additional level 4 and/or 5 scope will be evaluated at the next peer evaluation. In exceptional cases, inclusion of a level 4/5 scope may need evaluation as specifically defined by AFRAC for the particular level 4/5 scope.

Note: For definitions of Levels, please refer to IAF PR 4 or ILAC R6, as applicable.

- 2.2.1.2 Have demonstrated experience in operating an accreditation body, and have access to technical expertise in all aspects of its accreditation activities. Where the number of accredited CABs is less than 4 at the time of

evaluation, the need for a follow-up evaluation before the normal 4 year period shall be considered by the MRA Council.

2.2.1.3 Specify the acceptable routes for traceability, and assess its implementation by CABs (applicant and signatory ABs: see ILAC P10);

2.2.1.4 Ensure that it meets the relevant requirements for proficiency testing activity (applicant and signatory ABs: see ILAC P9);

2.2.1.5 Abide by the requirements and obligations of the applicable regional and international Arrangement(s);

2.2.1.6 Have evidence of promoting the Arrangement with major stakeholders;

2.2.1.7 Contribute its fair share of personnel resources for carrying out peer evaluations at the regional and/or global level, i.e. each signatory shall provide AFRAC with at least one peer evaluator for each program for which it is a signatory; and

2.2.1.8 Have implemented a cross frontier accreditation policy in accordance with the relevant IAF document(s) (for IAF signatories) or taking into account ILAC Guide 21 (for ILAC signatories).

2.2.2 Notification of change

Each accreditation body signatory to the AFRAC Arrangement shall report any significant changes in its status and/or its operating practices (e.g. as listed below) including the impact of these changes without delay to the AFRAC Secretariat.

For possible consequences associated with changes see Annex 6.

- Legal status;
- Senior accreditation program personnel;
- Contact person or liaison officer for the Arrangement;
- Accreditation criteria and procedures for its accreditation programs, related to the Arrangement;
- Office address (and postal address, if different), including head office and any offices;
- Relationship with Government;
- Other changes that significantly affect the competence or credibility of the accreditation process.

2.2.3 Confidentiality

2.2.3.1 All oral and written information received about the AB through the operation of AFRAC relating to pre-evaluations, evaluations, re-evaluations, appeals and complaints (except that information which is already publicly accessible) shall be treated confidentially by all parties and persons concerned. This includes information relating to applicants and/or signatories of the Arrangement. All individuals having access to confidential information shall provide a signed *Declaration of Confidentiality and Impartiality* form to the AFRAC secretariat before being given access.

2.2.3.2 The AB under evaluation and team leader shall agree about how to treat the documents it has provided. This may require the team members to:

- return all documents to the AB; or

- destroy the documentation, when it is determined there is no further need to maintain the documents.

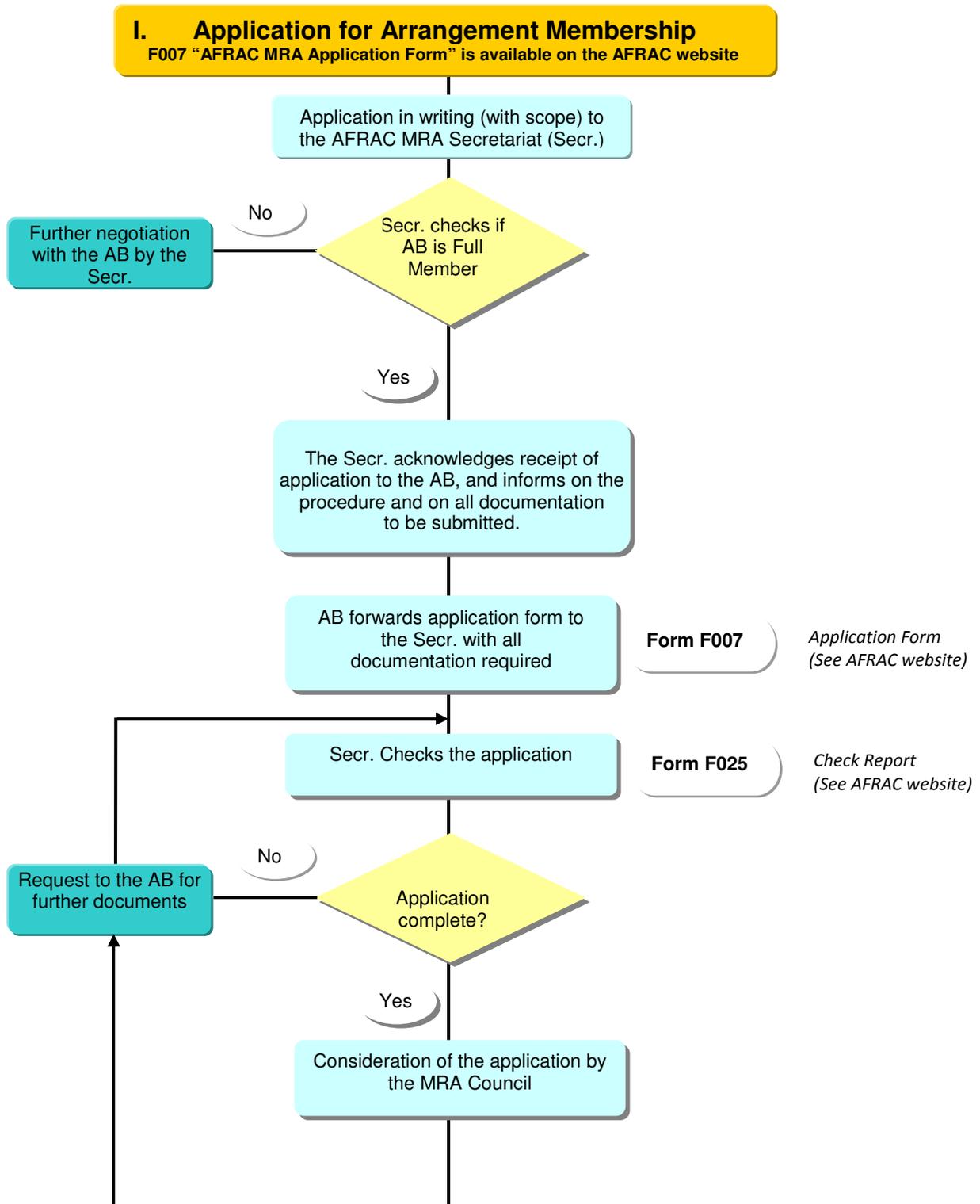
Evaluators are required to confirm with the AFRAC secretariat that the AB's documentation has been appropriately returned or destroyed.

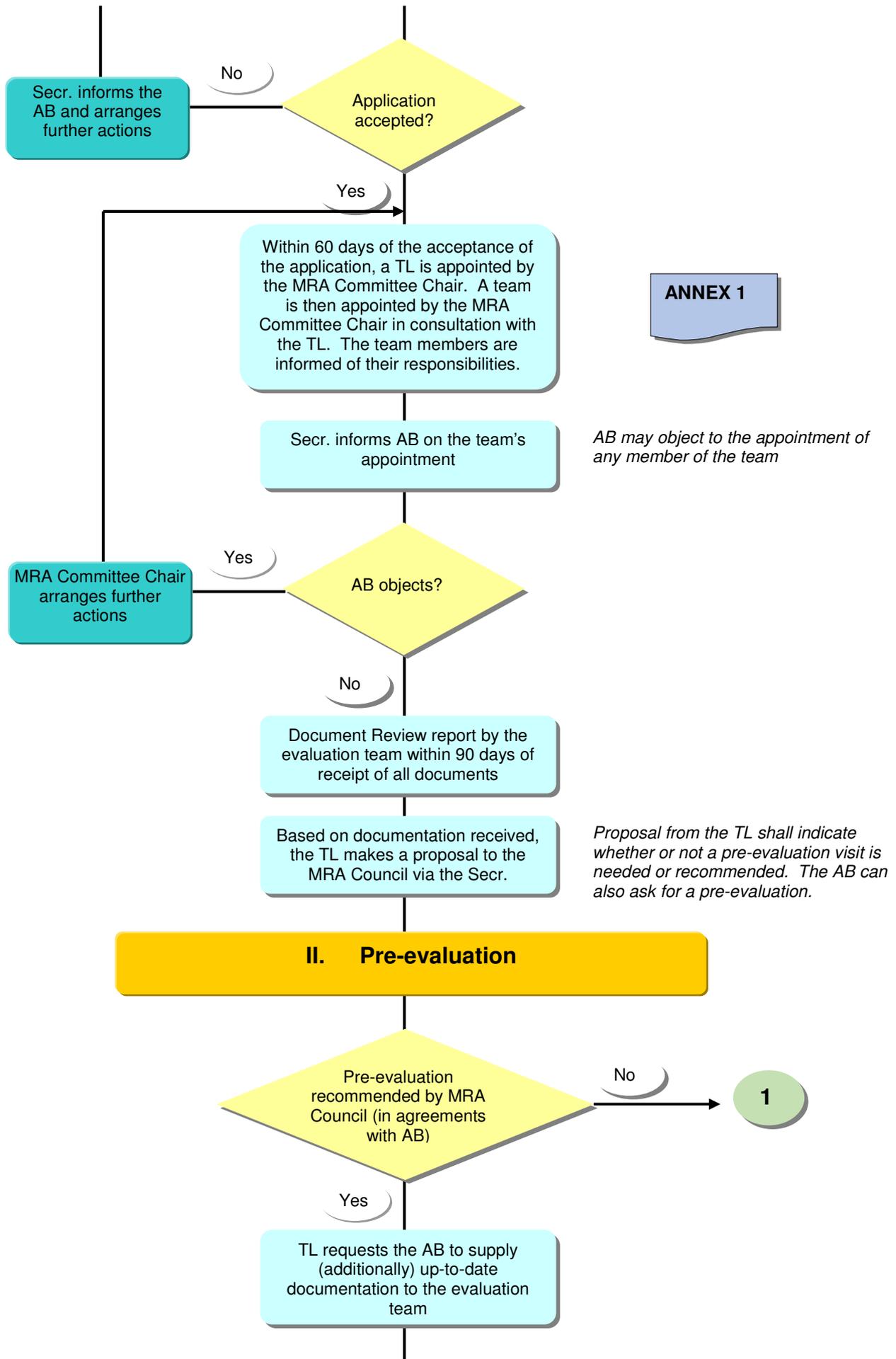
2.3 Conditions for application

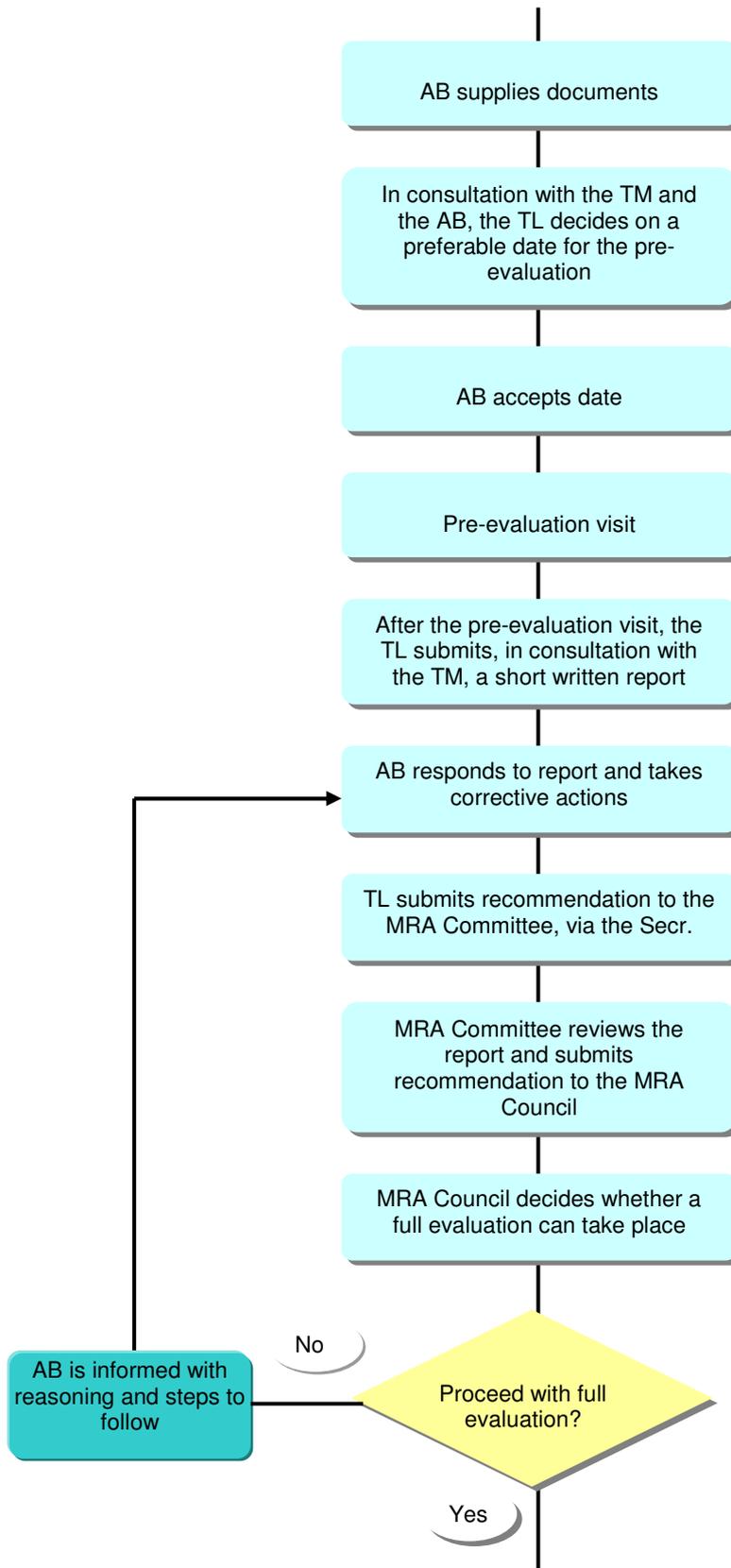
- 2.3.1 The AB agrees to pay for the hotel costs, meals and all travel costs of the evaluation team.
- 2.3.2 Travel shall be done in economy class unless the applicant agrees to pay business class. If the AB does not agree, then economy travel is mandated unless the evaluators wish to pay for their own airlines upgrades.
- 2.3.3 Observers/trainees pay all of their own costs.

SECTION 3: FLOWCHART FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The following procedures shall be used by AFRAC for the evaluation of AB's.

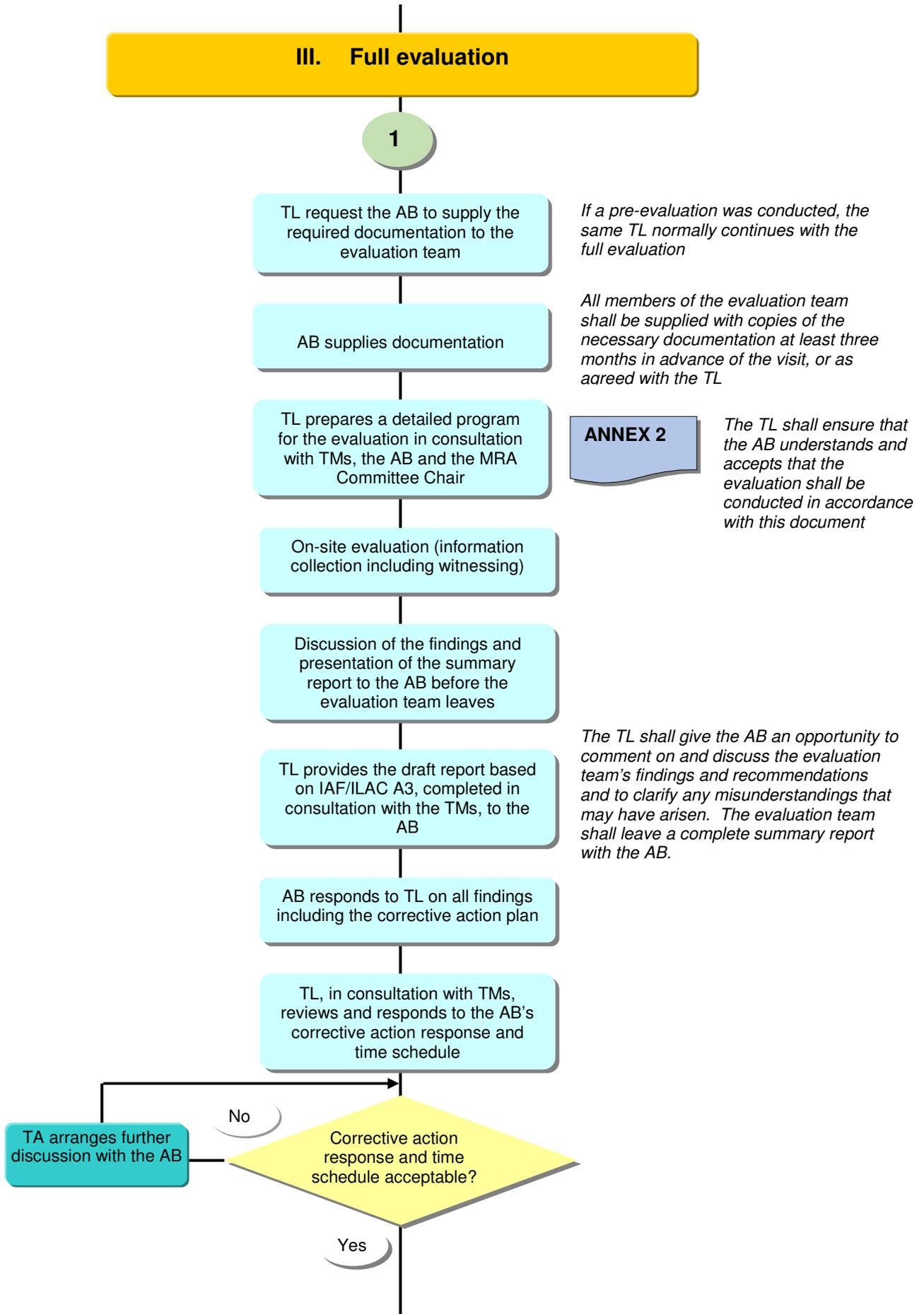


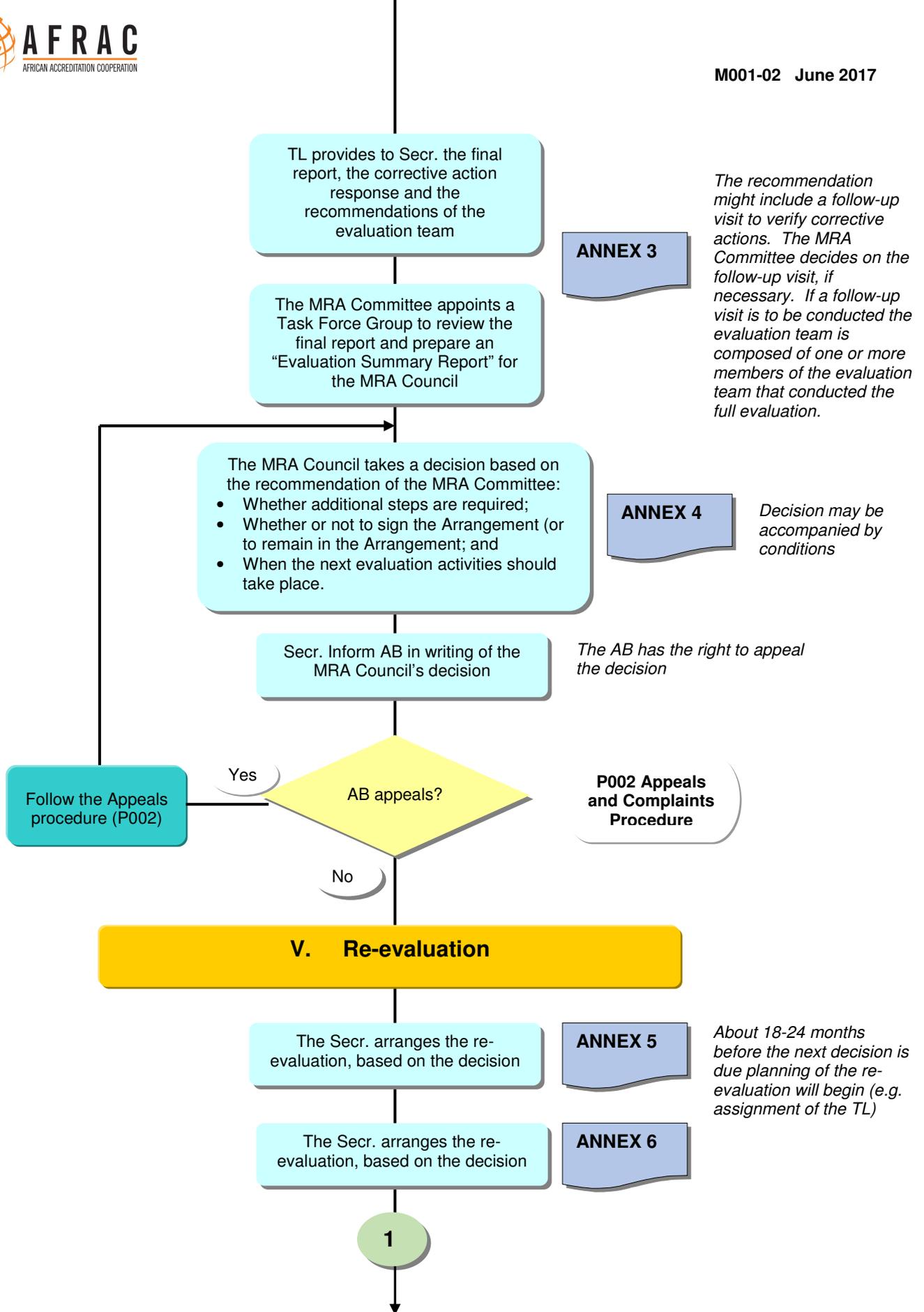




The pre-evaluation will only take place subject to the supply of the required documentation at least one month before the agreed date

The AB will be given the opportunity to comment on any factual errors in the report. If a pre-evaluation has taken place, the full evaluation visit will not be carried out before the AB has taken all the actions agreed at the pre-evaluation visit.





ANNEX 1: PROCEDURE FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND COMPOSITION OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

1.1 Composition of the Evaluation Team

- 1.1.1 For the full evaluation visit, members of the evaluation team shall be chosen as needed to cover the types of accreditation, the technical scopes, and the size and complexity of the accreditation system under evaluation.
- 1.1.2 Team members shall be chosen, in consultation with the TL, from the list of team members (see the AFRAC Register of Evaluators) qualified according to the process for the selection and qualification of evaluators, as described in P011 "Process and Procedures for Selection, Qualification and Monitoring of Evaluators", and kept up-to-date by the AFRAC MRA Secretary. This list records the scopes and sub-scopes for which the evaluator is considered competent and experienced in evaluations.
- 1.1.3 The evaluation team chosen shall consist of representatives from a cross-section of Member Accreditation Bodies. The evaluation team shall be chosen to provide a balanced set of skills so as to be able to conduct an effective evaluation of the key components of the system under examination.
- 1.1.4 No team member shall be associated with any accreditation body that has provided consultancy service to the accreditation body being evaluated within three years prior to the evaluation.
- 1.1.5 A team should not have more than two evaluators participating in their first evaluation (trainees). For the trainee evaluators on the team, a qualified mentor (an evaluator with experience in more than two evaluations) will be appointed.
- 1.1.6 A team member may, in addition to his/her evaluation tasks, mentor any "trainee peer evaluator" (those performing their first evaluation) assigned to the evaluation team. Mentoring trainees includes allocating him/her such task as he/she is capable of performing, supervising and providing a report to the MRA Committee about the performance of the trainee.

NOTE 1: It is normal practice that evaluators from as many members as possible are appointed in a team.

NOTE 2: A team leader should normally be accompanied by at least one other team member for a pre-evaluation visit to ensure more than one person is involved in establishing an applicant's readiness for a full evaluation visit.

NOTE 3: There should be no more than one team member from each economy.

NOTE 4: Some of the evaluation team members may have as their only task to perform witnessing at different geographical places or at different times than the rest of the evaluation team.

1.2 Appointment and Duties of the Evaluation Team Leader:

- 1.2.1 In appointing an evaluation team leader for a specific evaluation, the MRA Committee Chair should not appoint the same team leader for two successive evaluations of the same applicant.

- 1.2.2 Team leaders shall be chosen from the list of team leaders (see the AFRAC Register of Evaluators) prepared based on the process for the selection of team leaders described in P011 "Process and Procedures for Selection, Qualification and Monitoring of Evaluators", and kept up-to-date by the AFRAC MRA Secretary. This list records the scopes and sub-scopes for which the team leader is considered competent and experienced in evaluations.
- 1.2.3 The team leader shall have ultimate responsibilities for all phases of evaluation and is delegated authority by the MRA Council to make final decisions regarding the conduct of evaluation.

1.3 Appointment and Duties of the Evaluation Deputy Team Leader:

- 1.3.1 A Deputy Team Leader (Deputy TL) may be assigned. The role of the Deputy TL is to assist the TL in planning, preparation, and management of the evaluation. The Deputy TL can replace the TL in case of illness or unforeseen circumstances.
- 1.3.2 A Deputy TL can be identified one of two ways:
 - a) After a minimum of 2 peer evaluations (pre evaluations can be considered) as a TM with positive feedback from the participating TLs and ABs, a TM may be invited to become a Deputy TL if he/she has also demonstrated that he/she fulfils the conditions for a Peer Evaluator Team Leader, as in section 3.5.3 of P011 "Process and Procedures for Selection, Qualification and Monitoring of Evaluators".

Note: The role of Deputy TL may be used as training for future Team Leader

- b) Alternately, a deputy team leader may be an approved team leader but if assigned to a team, the Deputy TL shall have different competences than the TL to cover as much as possible of the accreditation activities of the AB under evaluation

ANNEX 2: TYPICAL EVALUATION PROGRAM OF AN ACCREDITATION BODY

A. Pre-evaluation program

If it is determined by AFRAC or the applicant AB that a pre-evaluation of the AB is needed before the full evaluation can take place, a pre-evaluation program shall be prepared. Based on the results of the document review, the pre-evaluation team may consider reviewing the following in the context of the pre-evaluation:

- Management system policies and procedures (as part of a document review prior to the pre-evaluation visit);
- Legal identification of the AB;
- Relationships with the regulators and other specifiers (e.g. recognition; possible competition);
- Job descriptions and backgrounds of top management, organization chart;
- Impartiality and conflict of interest; related bodies;
- Access to technical expertise;
- Application documents;
- Assessor records and documents;
- Sampling of CAB assessment records, including the decision making process;
- Proficiency testing participation levels (for testing and calibration accreditation, and inspection bodies where relevant);
- Measurement traceability routes (for testing and calibration accreditation, and inspection bodies where relevant). In some cases it may be necessary to visit the NMI;
- Witnessing one or more assessments, if possible.

B. Full evaluation program

1. Introduction

The task of an evaluation of an AB is to collect sufficient information about the assessments and decision making process of the AB to have confidence in the conformity assessment results from CABs accredited by the AB such that the signatories to the Arrangement can promote acceptance of these results.

It is the task of the TL to create a timetable in a timely manner prior to the evaluation of the AB that allows sufficient time to collect information for obtaining such confidence.

Because there exists a large variety of circumstances under which an evaluation will take place, it is the prerogative of the TL to deviate from the examples shown in 3.2 of this annex. The TL should agree with the team members on the duration. Consultation with the accreditation body under evaluation is essential. When the proposed timetable largely differs from the examples of 3.2.2 of this annex or when additional evaluation team capacity is required, the Chair of the MRA Committee should also be consulted at an early stage.

2. Considerations

2.1 Maximum Duration

The TL should arrange the evaluation to take place in the shortest possible time, preferably within one full (7 days) week. If witnessing is not possible during the week of the formal evaluation and if no alternatives are possible, the TL should schedule witnessing to be performed in the weeks preceding the evaluation. This

will allow for a well-founded closing meeting in which all fact finding can be reviewed and discussed. It is additionally advised to use only experienced team members for such parts of the evaluation.

2.2 Types of Evaluation

There are different kinds of evaluation: e.g. initial evaluation, pre-evaluations, follow-up evaluations, evaluation for scope extensions, re-evaluation. Given the long interval (approximately 4 years) between evaluations, the duration of a re-evaluation is comparable to that of an initial evaluation. A shorter duration applies for pre-evaluations, for follow-up evaluations and for scope extensions that are conducted separately from a re-evaluation.

2.3 Witnessing

The evaluation team shall consider how to deal with witnessing.
For every level 3 there shall be:

- One witness of an initial assessment or re-assessment of a CAB.
 - While full assessments are preferred, other on-site assessment activities may be considered. When the witnessing of other on-site assessment activities takes the place of the witnessing of a full assessment or re-assessment, then those activities must include all of the accreditation requirements and assessment of a portion of the scope of accreditation. The key is that the evaluation team witness the performance of technical activities of the CAB as much as possible;
- or two other on-site assessment activities, including a portion of the scope of accreditation which may each only include parts of the accreditation requirements.

The evaluation team shall also witness other reassessments and assessments activities as determined by the team leader or the MRA Committee.

For certification and validation/ verification, the evaluation team should witness the AB assessment team performing the assessment of the body only at the office location.

Note: For definitions of Level 2 and Level 3, please refer to IAF PR 4 or ILAC R6, as applicable.

2.4 Size of the Accreditation Body

The influence of the AB's scope on the duration of the evaluation (on-site part) relates primarily to the number of witnessing activities. The AB's management system may not differ (see ISO/IEC 17011) too much when the AB has one activity or several activities. When there is a large difference in the number of accreditations in the various fields, the TL may decide to place more emphasis on witnessing in the larger field(s).

Since Memoranda of Understanding (e.g. with regulators or specifiers of the AB's economy) are being concluded with certain industry sectors, specific attention may be needed to assure the AB's competence to assess in these fields.

It must be stressed that, despite spending time on witnessing, it is very important to spend ample time to check on how an AB selects its assessors and experts for a

particular assessment. Thorough checking of records from assessments is required including matching the assessor's expertise to the scope of the CAB being assessed.

2.5 Other Factors

Factors that may influence the duration of the evaluation include:

- Need for translators;
- Extensive travel and travel circumstance; and
- Cultural differences.

This annex cannot provide guidance on all these items. It is left to the team members and their experience to judge these effects and to cater to them in such a way that there is no compromise to the principle stated in the introduction to this annex.

3. Managing the evaluation

3.1 Preparation and Planning

- 3.1.1 The time for the evaluators to spend on preparation largely depends on the quality of the documents that the AB forwards. The documents that are required are specified in form *F007 "AFRAC MRA Application Form", item 20*). Accurate translation of the documents into English by the AB is essential.
- 3.1.2 The self-assessment document (IAF/ILAC A3) and the cross-reference table (form F026) shall be detailed and accurate. These documents will greatly assist the evaluation team in preparation. If the self-assessment document (IAF/ILAC A3) does not provide adequate information to the team, the team leader can ask the AB to revise the document with the necessary information.
- 3.1.3 The AB shall send all documents to the evaluation team, at least 3 months in advance of a visit to allow for preparation and for requesting additional information.
- 3.1.4 The team members should start reviewing the documents directly after receipt. In essence the team leader should be able to prepare a part of the report with background information **before** the on-site evaluation. This part of the preparation is the same for all types of evaluations. The total time involved in studying the documentation may take an average of 3 to 5 days for the TL and 2 to 4 days for the team members.
- 3.1.5 For planning of the witnessing, the AB shall provide the assessment planning. This gives the evaluation team the opportunity to carefully select and plan the witnessing activities taking into consideration the following:
- standards for accreditation,
 - number of accredited CAB,
 - size of the fields,
 - initial evaluation/re-evaluation,
 - witnessed assessments from the last evaluation,
 - cross frontier accreditation policy and relative procedures.

If the applicant or signatory is active in the framework of an industry or regulator specific scheme, then the fulfilling of the requirements set by that industry group or by regulators for accreditation bodies shall also be considered on a sampling basis.

3.2 On-site Evaluation

3.2.1 The evaluation team should be prepared to undertake long working days during the on-site evaluation.

An on-site visit typically consists of:

- Opening meeting, presentation by team leader outlining aims, objectives and procedure to be used by evaluation team;
- Evaluation of the AB's offices and management system, review of files and records;
- Discussing of the results of the self-assessment document (IAF/ILAC A3);
- Evaluation of the assessment reports, including preparation of the assessment and decision making records (and possible witnessing of the accreditation decision making process.);
- Splitting of the team in accordance with their experiences for the purpose of witness including the on-site preparation of the draft evaluation report with a list of findings;
- Witness of a CAB for every scope (see Clause B 2.3 of this annex);
- Discussion of the results of the witnessing with the evaluation team and AB; and
- Closing meeting, presentation and discussion of findings.

Some timetable examples are shown on the following page.

3.2.2 ABs with single scope

Day	Actions	Evaluators
Day 1	3 hours for preparation with the evaluation team Office, opening meeting, records, etc. (key issues to be addressed + evaluation plan)	TL + 2 TM
Day 2	Office + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 2 TM
Day 3	Office + witnessing staff + preparation final report + closing meeting	TL + 2 TM
Day 4 morning	Discussing further actions for TMs + departure	TL + 2 TM

3.2.3 ABs with 2 scopes

Day	Actions	Evaluators
Day 1	3 hours for preparation with the evaluation team Office, opening meeting, records, etc. (key issues to be addressed + evaluation plan)	TL + 2 TM
Day 2	Office + preparation for witnessing assessments	TL + 2 TM
Day 3	Office + witnessing staff + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 2 TM
Day 4	Same + preparation final report + closing meeting	TL + 2 TM
Day 5 morning	Discussing further actions for TMs + departure	TL + 2 TM

3.2.4 ABs with 3 scopes

Day	Actions	Evaluators
Sunday	>= 4 hours for preparation with the evaluation team (key issues to be addressed + evaluation plan)	TL + 3 TM
Monday	Office, opening meeting, records, etc. + preparation for witnessing assessments	TL + 3 TM
Tuesday	Office + witnessing staff + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 3 TM
Wednesday	Office + witnessing staff + vertical audits + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 3 TM
Thursday	Office + witnessing staff + vertical audits (specially directed for confirmation of previous findings) + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 3 TM
Friday	Preparation final report + closing meeting + Discussing further actions for TMs + departure	TL + 3 TM

3.2.5 ABs with full scope

Day	Actions	Evaluators
Sunday	>= 4 hours for preparation with the evaluation team (key issues to be addressed + evaluation plan)	TL + 4 TM
Monday	Office, opening meeting, records, etc. + preparation for witnessing assessments	TL + 4 TM
Tuesday	Office + witnessing staff + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 4 TM
Wednesday	Office + witnessing staff + vertical audits + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 4 TM
Thursday	Office + witnessing staff + vertical audits (specially directed for confirmation of previous findings) + witnessing assessments (split evaluation team)	TL + 4 TM
Friday	Same + Preparation final report + closing meeting	TL + 4 TM
Saturday	Discussing further actions for TMs + departure	

NOTE: This is guidance only. In some regions it is common for a four person (laboratory accreditation evaluation) team to witness up to 10 different laboratories, during a five day evaluation. Where the NMI is not a signatory to the CIPM MRA or where the NMI's CMCs are not listed in the BIPM database, the evaluation team should consider the need to visit the NMI and any designated institute so as to evaluate the traceability routes available to accredited laboratories. The emphasis should be on witnessing enough to have confidence in the accreditation process, and a high level of confidence in the competence of the accredited bodies.

3.2.6 The team members should meet to discuss their findings and possibly adjust the focus of their attention. The TL will need to add/modify/enhance the preliminary report that resulted from the studying of the documentation and discuss such changes during the week with the team members. The TL may also require the AB to provide a general description of the AB to be used in the report.

3.3 Activities after the On-site Evaluation

- 3.3.1 Electronic means to communicate with the team members should be sufficient to provide feedback and support as the TL prepares the final report for the AB.
- 3.3.2 The evaluation team needs to spend time on reviewing the AB's corrective actions and on the preparation of the evaluation team's comment to these corrective actions. The TL should take the lead in preparing this reaction.
- 3.3.3 Finally the TL shall prepare a recommendation to the MRA Council for their decision.
- 3.3.4 Typically these activities may take 2-3 days for the TL. For TMs, the time involved may be limited to 0.5 days.
- 3.3.5 Writing the Evaluation Report: IAF/ILAC A3 contains information concerning the structure and timeline for writing and presenting a report.

ANNEX 3: CONTENT OF THE EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT ON AN ACCREDITATION BODY

(This report is prepared by the Task Force Group appointed by the MRA Committee for presentation to the MRA Council)

Applicant:

Evaluation team:

Identification of the full evaluation report:

Evaluation sites and dates:

Applicant's office(s):

Witnessed assessments:

Scope of evaluation:

Applicant organisation

Number of staff:

Accreditation programs:

Number of bodies accredited:

Organizational structure:

Decision making process:

Relationships (e.g., government, other bodies, international organizations):

Findings of the evaluation team (non-conformities, concerns and comments):

Conclusions:

Statements of closeout of nonconformities and concerns:

Unresolved issues:

Conclusion and recommendation:

NOTE: In cases where a task force group (TFG) reviews the report and completes an evaluation summary report on behalf of the MRA Committee, this report may address TFG remarks and conclusions, composition of the TFG, and comments on the process. Issues for consideration may include:

- Were AFRAC procedures followed?
- Was the appropriate normative documents applied?
- Does the report contain sufficient information to support a decision?
- Are the conclusions and recommendations supported by the report?
- Are the findings appropriately classified, clear and concise?
- Is the proposed/implemented corrective action appropriate to the finding?
- Were the findings appropriately closed?
- Were there any issues raised by the TFG that required a response from the team?

ANNEX 4: PROCEDURE FOR DECISION MAKING REGARDING EVALUATIONS OF AN ACCREDITATION BODY

1. Decision making regarding AFRAC evaluations

- 1.1 The evaluation report, the corrective actions and the recommendations of the team leader shall be submitted as the final report to the Chair of the MRA Committee and the AFRAC Secretary. The Secretary shall distribute the final report to the MRA Committee and MRA Council members.
 - 1.1.1 Reports on all evaluation visits may be copied to the MRA Committee and MRA Council members.
 - 1.1.2 Regulators or other observers who are allowed to attend the decision making meetings, may also be provided with the evaluation/re-evaluation report for a given AB, with that the MRA Council and AB's written permission.
- 1.2 The Chair of the MRA Committee may appoint a Task Force Group to prepare a summary report for the MRA Council which shall decide:
 - in the case of an initial evaluation, whether or not the applicant may enter the Arrangement;
 - in the case of a re-evaluation, whether or not the accreditation body will remain a signatory to the Arrangement. Positive decisions can be accompanied by conditions (see Clause 2 of this Annex).

NOTE 1: The MRA Council may decide to carry out a re-evaluation, partly or totally prior to the normal 4-year period. Normally this would be the case after initial evaluations or fundamental re-organizations.

NOTE 2: For voting rules see the AFRAC Bylaws.

- 1.3 Any Team Leader or Team Member involved in an evaluation cannot cast the vote when that evaluation decision is made.

2. Decision making regarding joint evaluations

- 2.1 When AFRAC carries out a joint evaluation of an accreditation body with another Regional Group, ILAC or IAF (referred to in this section as "the other organisation"), AFRAC and the other organisation will need to review and make a decision on that particular evaluation. This section provides a process for the joint review of reports from those joint evaluations, while ensuring that each organisation will make its own separate decision.
- 2.2 AFRAC and the other organisation will appoint a Task Force Group (TFG), with four to six members to review the evaluation report. The AFRAC MRA Committee Chair and Chair of the other organisation's Management Committee (MC) will appoint one of the members of the TFG to be the convener (see point 3 below). The role of convener for these TFGs will alternate between AFRAC and the other organisation. The TFG members shall be members of the AFRAC MRA Committee and the other organisation's MC. Members of the TFG will have signed a confidentiality statement. The evaluation team and the evaluated body should be informed about the establishment of the TFG and the members.

- 2.3 All members and observers of the AFRAC MRA Committee, AFRAC MRA Council and the other organisation's MC and decision-making body will have access to the evaluation report and may send their comments to the TFG for their consideration.
- 2.4 The task of the TFG is to evaluate the report for comprehensiveness, clarity and the classification of findings. The TFG is to complete a proposal for an Evaluation Summary Report. The TFG shall provide the proposed Evaluation Summary Report to the Chairs of the AFRAC MRA Committee and the other organisation's MC within 30 days of the TFG receiving the evaluation report. The Evaluation Summary Report template can be found in Annex 3 of this document.
- 2.4.1 The TFG is expected to communicate with the evaluation team and, if necessary, with the AB under evaluation; in cases where there are open, missing or unclear issues in the report, in order to solve or clarify them. The Chair of the AFRAC MRA Committee and Chair of the other organisation's MC shall be copied on all communications.

2.5 TFG Competencies

- 2.5.1. To appreciate comprehensiveness the TFG will need to have an understanding of what should be in a report from a generic and specific perspective. The TFG shall have collective expertise at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the AFRAC Arrangement and the other organisation's Arrangement.
- 2.5.2 The TFG needs to understand; the planning and conduct of the evaluation, its breadth and depth, the findings and their classification, and the adequacy of the conclusions, and recommendations. The competencies required would be consistent with that of an individual with experience as a CB auditor or an AB assessor, and exposure to the policies and procedures of AFRAC and the other organisation, as well as practical experience in the peer evaluation process.
- 2.5.3. To be able to effectively correspond with the team, the TFG convener requires good communication skills and an understanding of the criteria and process. The competencies would be similar to those listed in point 2.5.2 above.
- 2.5.4. At least one member each from AFRAC and the other organisation appointed to the TFG, shall be a qualified peer evaluator.
- 2.5.5. There should be a balance of members with competencies on the AFRAC MRA and on the Arrangement of the other organisation.
- 2.5.6 The Chair of the AFRAC MRA Committee and Chair of the other organisation's MC will review the draft Evaluation Summary Report prepared by the TFG, in 30 days after the reception, and make any changes as necessary before submitting it to the AFRAC MRA Council and to the other organisation's decision-making body for the separate decision making process. Issues of common interest for both organisations will be discussed jointly by both management committees, while issues that apply only to AFRAC or the other organisation may either be discussed in a joint meeting or in separate meetings of the respective management committee.

3. Hierarchy of decisions

- 3.1 Decisions made as a result of peer evaluations can take many forms. Implicit in these decisions is the possibility of a variety of "conditions". This guidance outlines a hierarchy of the major types of decisions from the most positive decision to the least positive decision; conditions of increasing severity are imposed.
- 3.2 The AFRAC MRA Council makes all decisions on MRA signatories.
- 3.3 Decisions shall be made in a period of 30 days after the review made by the MRA Committee TFG. The MRA Council members participating in the decision making shall have an understanding of: objective and purpose of the Arrangement; criteria used for the evaluation; the evaluation process and the arrangement structure. There are primarily two situations to address: *new applicant accreditation bodies* and *signatory accreditation bodies*. A third situation that is not addressed below is the possibility of adverse decisions or sanctions imposed on an Arrangement signatory which fails to abide by its obligations under the Arrangement itself.
- 3.4 Decisions on new applicant accreditation bodies:
- Approval without conditions (re-evaluation to occur 4 years hence);
 - Approval with conditions (e.g. shortened interval for re-evaluation);
 - Defer approval pending submittal of required evidence of corrective actions and/or re-visit by one or more members of the evaluation team to confirm implementation of corrective actions; and
 - Disapproval with a new evaluation required.

Note: Disapproval should rarely happen for new applicant accreditation bodies since an evaluation report is normally only submitted for a decision once a consensus of the evaluation team and the AFRAC MRA Committee has concluded that all requirements have been met.

ANNEX 5: PROCEDURE FOR RE-EVALUATION OF AN AFRAC SIGNATORY AND ONGOING CONFIDENCE BUILDING ACTIVITIES

1. Periodic monitoring and re-evaluation of the Arrangement signatories is necessary (see also Annex 1).
2. All Arrangement signatories shall be formally re-evaluated at maximum intervals of four years from the last day of the previous evaluation.
3. The Signatory under re-evaluation shall provide the evaluation team with all the documents which are required for an initial evaluation (see *Application form F007, item 20*). In addition the evaluation team shall get the full evaluation report from the last evaluation/re-evaluation or any special evaluation.
4. Partial to total re-evaluation may be conducted at an earlier date as directed by the MRA Council, should there be due cause such as notification of significant changes in administration, finances, operational practices or an extension of the scope of accreditation available.
5. The impact of changes notified by an arrangement signatory shall be evaluated (see Section 2, Clause 2.2.2).
6. Re-evaluation visits should be led by an evaluation team, in which the majority of members will not have been in the evaluation team that undertook the previous evaluation.

ANNEX 6: PROCEDURES FOR MAINTENANCE, SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF AFRAC SIGNATORIES

1. Maintenance, suspension and withdrawal

- 1.1 It may be that the MRA Council cannot accept the significant changes notified by the accreditation body, the corrective action taken by this accreditation body, major non-conformities which have been found or substantiated complaints from interested parties. The MRA Council will take appropriate action, which can be suspension for a maximum period of 6 months or withdrawal from the Arrangement.
- 1.2 Maintenance, suspension or withdrawal of a signatory body shall be decided by the MRA Council after receipt of the recommendation by the MRA Committee. Any suspension or withdrawal decided by the MRA Council shall be accompanied by an appropriate explanation stating the reason for suspension or withdrawal.
- 1.3 Any suspension or withdrawal decided by the MRA Council shall be accompanied by an appropriate explanation stating the reason for suspension or withdrawal to the signatory.
- 1.4 The MRA Council shall immediately suspend or withdraw an accreditation body from the Arrangement if it receives notification from ILAC/IAF that it is, for any reason, suspended or withdrawn as a member of ILAC/IAF.
- 1.5 In the event of a decision to suspend, AFRAC shall:
 - a) officially notify the accreditation body of the decision to suspend, the reasons for the decision to suspend, the period of the suspension, and the conditions for lifting of the suspension;
 - b) Prior to taking further action on the decision to suspend, notify the accreditation body of their right to Appeal the decision (see P002 "Appeals and Complaints Procedure");
 - c) If the appeal is not upheld, amend the list of Arrangement signatories to identify that the body is suspended;
 - d) notify all Arrangement signatories of the suspension; and
 - e) remind the accreditation body of the consequences of suspension.
- 1.6 The consequences of suspension shall be decided by the MRA Council on a case-by-case basis, depending on the reason for suspension. The consequences of suspension may include, for the applicable main scope and/or sub-scope that the AB shall:
 - a) not actively promote the fact that they are a signatory to the Arrangement;
 - b) not issue any accreditation documents that bear the AFRAC MRA Mark;
 - c) not participate in any ballots associated with the Arrangement;
 - d) notify all accredited CABs of the suspension and the consequences of the suspension as it relates to them; and
 - e) notify stakeholders in their economies of the suspension.
- 1.7 The obligations of the accreditation body while suspended are:
 - a) continue to comply with the obligations of full membership;
 - b) cooperate fully with the MRA Committee and MRA Council to enable a speedy resolution of the suspension;
 - c) maintain oversight of their accredited CABs; and
 - d) continue to vote on AFRAC ballots, other than those associated with the

Arrangement.

- 1.8 In the event of withdrawal, AFRAC shall:
 - a) officially notify the accreditation body of the withdrawal and the reasons for the withdrawal;
 - b) prior to taking action on the decision to withdraw, notify the accreditation body of their right to Appeal the decision;
 - c) if the appeal is not upheld, amend the list of Arrangement signatories to withdraw the signatory;
 - d) notify all Arrangement signatories of the withdrawal;
 - e) terminate the agreement for use of the AFRAC MRA Mark; and
 - f) remind the accreditation body of the consequences of withdrawal.

- 1.9 The consequences of withdrawal, for the applicable main scope or sub-scope of the Arrangement are that the AB shall:
 - a) immediately stop promoting the fact that they are a signatory to the Arrangement;
 - b) immediately stop issuing any accreditation documents that bear the AFRAC MRA Mark; and
 - c) notify all accredited CABs of the withdrawal and terminate all relevant Agreements for the Use of the IAF MLA Mark and/or the ILAC MRA Mark, as applicable.

- 1.10 When a withdrawn accreditation body applies to become an Arrangement member again, the procedure for new applicants shall be followed.

ANNEX 7: AMENDMENT RECORD

Section	Change
All	Revision of entire document and alignment to IAF/ILAC-A2:03/2017