



Policy Circular 1 – November 2014

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Corporate accreditations – NATA accreditation of multiple site and/or multiple field facilities



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Corporate accreditations – NATA accreditation of multiple site and/or multiple field facilities

1. Overview

Corporate accreditation allows organisations to combine a number of accreditations into one. This may involve multiple facilities (i.e. fields/programs) on one site or spread over a number of different locations. For consideration as a corporate accreditation, the applicant must be a single legal entity.

The rationale for corporate accreditation is that efficiencies in accreditation are possible if a group of facilities are centrally managed and operated under a unified management system.

This also provides NATA with an opportunity to administer such accreditations in a more focused and coordinated manner.

Definitions

Facility	An organisation (or part thereof) providing testing and/or related services.
Legal entity	Natural person, partnership, organisation, firm, company, trust, government, semi-government, quasi-government statutory body or authority or association whether incorporated or not or any juristic entity that is registered as a business with the relevant Regulator.
Multi-site	A facility with a number of laboratories or activities occurring in different locations but all from the one field/program.
Multi-field	A facility with a number of laboratories or activities at the same location but in more than one field or program.
Multi-site/Multi-field	Facility with a number of laboratories or activities at different locations and with a number of fields/programs at some or all of these locations.
Site	A different field OR a different location.
Core site	This will be nominated by the facility. It is normally the head office or the site where the management system is administered.
Client coordinator	The Lead Assessor who manages and coordinates the corporate accreditation.

2. Features and benefits of corporate accreditation

The features and benefits of corporate accreditation are as follows:

- For multiple-site accreditations, a core site will be identified and considered as the source of central management between NATA and the organisation;
- A client coordinator will be appointed who will have the responsibility for planning and coordinating all accreditation activities covered by the corporate accreditation;
- There is the potential for recognition of signatories for multiple sites, depending on field/program specific criteria;
- Within the confines of NATA's Rules and accreditation criteria, surveillance of a corporate accreditation will be tailored as far as possible to the needs of that organisation; and
- Management will be provided with an organisation-wide view of their operations.

Application of the management system will still need to be evaluated at each site.

Please note that as there is only one accreditation number, there is only one Authorised Representative who is entitled to only one vote at a General Meeting of the Association.

3. Eligibility for corporate accreditation

The following conditions apply to gaining and maintaining a corporate accreditation:

- (i) The organisation must have a quality policy common to all sites included in the corporate accreditation.
- (ii) The management system must be centrally administered and uniformly applied across all work locations covered by the scope of the corporate accreditation. It is recognised that some local work instructions may be necessary due to location requirements etc. As a minimum requirement, the following elements of the management system must be centrally administered:
 - Management review;
 - Internal quality audits;
 - Corrective and preventive action;
 - Complaints;
 - Changes to the management system documentation for key elements;
 - Procedures for control of commonly occurring calibrations and user checks at various sites; and
 - Procedures for the establishment and closure of annex or temporary laboratories or other remote facilities where this is applicable.
- (iii) The organisation must have one appointed management representative with responsibility for maintenance and application of the management system across all locations, fields of testing and/or accreditation programs.
- (iv) The organisation must appoint one Authorised Representative who has the responsibility for all sites in relation to accreditation matters and who will be the central point of contact in the organisation for NATA. This may be, but need not be, the person responsible for maintenance of the management system. They must advise the client coordinator of any significant changes affecting any site of the corporate accreditation (i.e. changes to staff, range of testing etc.). You are referred to NATA's Policy Circular 14 – *Responsibilities of Authorised Representatives* for further details.
- (v) Each facility to be included in the corporate accreditation must satisfy the criteria for accreditation in each of the fields of testing and/or program into which its activities fall including participation in relevant proficiency testing programs. This will be determined by the usual assessment process.
- (vi) Any conditions for accreditation that are identified at the assessment of a site must be investigated and acted upon at all sites, where relevant to those sites. It should be noted that the conditions identified at one site may affect the accreditation status of other sites.

4. Client coordinator

An experienced member of NATA's accreditation staff will be appointed as the client coordinator to coordinate all accreditation activities for a corporate accreditation. Where possible, the client coordinator will also undertake the assessment of the core site.

5. Minimising duplication of systems assessments

As corporate accreditation is based on a uniform management system, it should not be necessary to duplicate the assessment of all elements of the management system for each field/program and each location covered by the corporate accreditation.

However, NATA reserves the right to conduct full system reassessments for any field, program or any location covered by a corporate accreditation, particularly when major management system deficiencies are identified at one or more locations.

6. Tailored assessment schedules

The appointment of a client coordinator should ensure that assessments are organised in a manner which causes the least disruption to normal operations. Whenever practicable, and with the agreement of the facility, combined assessments will be organised for multi-field and/or multi-program accreditations.

For multi-site accreditations the most resource effective arrangements for assessing individual locations will be negotiated with the facility under the coordination of the client coordinator. This must also be in accordance with the surveillance schedule of all the fields/programs involved.

7. Reporting on assessments

A Report on Assessment will be provided after each assessment identifying any conditions for accreditation. The response from the facility to this report must include an assurance that the conditions, where relevant, have been addressed at all sites. This would include documentary evidence for any conditions coded as “C”.

NATA will verify corrective action taken on conditions at all applicable sites.

The Authorised Representative will be advised of any conditions that have not been satisfactorily addressed.

8. How to apply

To discuss your interest in applying for corporate accreditation, please contact any NATA office. The relevant information and forms will then be sent out to you. This will include an *Application for Corporate Accreditation* form, which should be completed and forwarded to NATA. When allocated, the client coordinator will contact the facility and will provide access to the *Assessment Information Document – Corporate Accreditation*. This form is completed by the facility and forwarded to the client coordinator along with the quality manual(s) for the organisation.

i) Conversion of existing accreditations

Existing accreditations may be converted to corporate accreditations if such accreditations comply with the eligibility requirements under section 3 above.

Prior to corporate accreditation being granted, an initial documentation review of the facility’s corporate management system will be conducted to confirm compliance with the corporate accreditation criteria.

The facility will be provided with a report detailing any outstanding requirements. Once these are met and pending any outstanding field/program specific requirements, a recommendation for corporate accreditation will be made. One of the existing accreditation numbers will be nominated by the facility as the corporate accreditation number. The facility will be officially notified of this and a combined corporate scope of accreditation will be provided. Separate scopes for each site will also be provided after each site assessment.

Facilities can progressively expand the corporate accreditation to cover different sites.

ii) Initial applicants for accreditation

An initial documentation review of the facility’s corporate management system will be conducted to confirm compliance with the corporate accreditation criteria. The facility will be provided with a report detailing any outstanding requirements. The quality manuals will also be reviewed by the assessment teams for technical and field/program specific requirements prior to and as part of the on-site assessments for the various sites.

The procedures for on-site assessments are the same as for individual accreditation, however, the assessment of each site will be coordinated by the client coordinator.

iii) Changes to existing corporate accreditations

Where there has been a significant change to an existing corporate accreditation (e.g. ownership change, acquisition of additional sites, extension into new technical areas etc.) the Authorised Representative is required to notify the client coordinator. The steps to be taken regarding the changed circumstances will be determined on a case-by-case basis. For example this may involve additional document review, and there may be additional associated costs.

9. Fees

There are no application fees for organisations that are converting existing accreditations to corporate accreditation. However, there will be a documentation review for which a fee will be levied, to confirm the system’s compliance with the corporate accreditation criteria.

For applicants applying for corporate accreditation, the standard application fees will apply.

For current fee schedule see the NATA website or contact your nearest NATA office.

AMENDMENT TABLE

The table below provides a summary of changes made to the document with this issue.

Section	Amendment
Section 2	Reference to voting at NATA Council replaced