

MANAGEMENT OF OBSERVERS AT EVALUATIONS

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1. GENERAL

From time to time, the accreditation body under evaluation (the AB) and/or the evaluation teams may be asked to host one or more observers during the course of an on-site evaluation. As set out below, these may originate from a variety of sources. In general, and in the interests of increasing the transparency of the evaluation process, APAC encourages observers from interested parties to the APAC MRA. By witnessing first-hand the robustness of the peer evaluation process, stakeholders are able to gain increased confidence in the rigour of the MRA processes which in turn will lead to greater acceptance and use of the APAC MRA. However, ultimately it is the accreditation body under evaluation and the evaluation Team Leader who, by mutual agreement, allow observers at an evaluation.

With the exception of observers from ILAC evaluation teams (see Section 2 below), the role of observer is to observe only. They should not involve themselves in any way in the evaluation of the AB. Any need to ask questions and/or examine documents of the evaluation team, the AB, and possibly the AB’s applicant and accredited CABs should be done outside of formal evaluation activities.

1. OBSERVERS FROM IAF AND/OR ILAC EVALUATION TEAMS

Generally every 4 years, APAC is evaluated by IAF and/or ILAC as part of APAC’s recognition as a Recognised Region under the IAF MLA or ILAC MRA. As part of these evaluations, IAF or ILAC evaluators will witness the conduct of at least two APAC evaluations, collectively covering the APAC evaluations of all scopes of recognition under the IAF MLA and ILAC MRA. It is incumbent on all APAC MRA signatories and APAC evaluation teams to accommodate these witnessed evaluations.

The IAF/ILAC evaluators should be involved (by both the AB and the Team Leader) at all stages of the evaluation process, commencing at the very early stages, as if they are another member of the evaluation team. This will include the provision of the AB’s documentation, development of the evaluation timetable, logistical arrangements (travel, accommodation, interpreters, etc.), observation of closed evaluation team meetings, observation of the evaluation opening meeting and the AB’s office evaluation, observation of the evaluation team’s witnessing of the AB’s assessment of CABs, observation of the evaluation closing meeting, etc. It is the responsibility of the AB to seek the agreement of its CABs for IAF/ILAC evaluators to attend witnessed assessments. IAF/ILAC evaluators shall sign the APAC Declaration of Confidentiality (APAC FGOV-007).

All costs associated with IAF/ILAC evaluators witnessing APAC evaluations are paid by APAC. The arrangements for the purchase of goods / services (e.g. airfares, accommodation, meals, etc.), or reimbursement of the same, needs to be established through liaison with all parties (the AB, the APAC Team Leader, the APAC Secretariat and the IAF/ILAC evaluators themselves) at an early stage.

The role of IAF/ILAC evaluators is to observe the APAC evaluation process and they should not involve themselves in any way in the evaluation of the AB. However, they may need to ask questions and/or examine documents of the evaluation team, the AB, and possibly the AB’s applicant and accredited CABs in order to clarify any observations they may have. The AB and the evaluation team are expected to afford the IAF/ILAC evaluator the necessary cooperation as long as it does not interfere in the evaluation process.

1. OBSERVERS FROM APAC MEMBERS

Observers from APAC members (other than the AB under evaluation) may request to observe an evaluation. The Team Leader would generally only accept such observers if they were:

* From a member who is an applicant, or potential applicant, to the APAC MRA and who wants to learn about the APAC evaluation process, or;
* A staff member of a member body who intends to become an APAC evaluator and observing an evaluation is part of the training to that end.

The Team Leader should not accept observers for the purpose of training new staff of members as part of the member’s internal training programme.

Provided the Team Leader is able and willing to accept an observer, the agreement of the AB shall be sought. If all parties are in agreement, then the observer should be involved in all stages of the evaluation process as if they were a member of the evaluation team. This will include the activities listed in the second paragraph of Section 2 above. It is the responsibility of the AB to seek the agreement of its CABs for observers to attend witnessed assessments. These observers shall sign the APAC Declaration of Confidentiality (APAC FGOV-007).

All costs associated with observers of this type are paid by the observers. They should purchase their own airline tickets. Arrangements for the purchase of local goods / services (e.g. domestic airfares, accommodation reservations, meals, etc.) needs to be established through liaison with all parties (typically the AB and the observer directly).

1. OBSERVERS AS GUESTS OF THE AB

The evaluated AB may wish to invite domestic stakeholders to observe their evaluations, often for the purpose of recognising the APAC MRA and peer evaluation process as a means of recognising the domestic accreditation body and other signatories to the APAC MRA.

The AB is expected to seek the agreement of the Team Leader for such observers, and to indicate which of the evaluation activities each of the observers wishes to observe i.e. the AB office evaluation (generally including the evaluation opening and closing meetings), the witnessing of the AB’s assessments of its CABs, and/or the evaluation team’s closed meetings. While APAC encourages such interest in the peer evaluation process, it is the decision of the Team Leader whether or not to accept such observers for all or some of the activities mentioned.

Where such observers observe only the open sessions (AB office evaluation including opening and closing meetings, witnessed assessments), the AB is responsible for any confidentiality requirements they have for visitors. Where observers also observe the evaluation team closed meetings, they shall sign the APAC Declaration of Confidentiality (APAC FGOV-007).

All costs associated with observers of this type are the responsibility of the AB and/or the observers themselves.

1. OBSERVERS AS GUESTS OF APAC

Occasionally, APAC may request that stakeholders from outside the APAC membership be permitted to observe an evaluation. (Observers from IAF/ILAC evaluation teams (Section 2 above) can be considered a special case.) This request would normally come through the APAC MRA Council Chair who would seek the agreement of both the AB and the Team Leader, indicating which of the evaluation activities the observer wishes to observe, i.e. the AB office evaluation (generally including the evaluation opening and closing meetings), the witnessing of the AB’s assessments of its CABs, and/or the evaluation team’s closed meetings.

If all parties are in agreement then the Team Leader should establish with the observers how much they wish to be involved in the different stages of the evaluation process, and involve them as appropriate (e.g. see the activities listed in the second paragraph of Section 2 above). It is the responsibility of the AB to seek the agreement of its CABs for observers to attend witnessed assessments. These observers shall sign the APAC Declaration of Confidentiality (APAC FGOV-007).

All costs associated with observers of this type are paid by the observer and/or APAC. They should be purchase their own airline tickets. Arrangements for the purchase of local goods / services (e.g. domestic airfares, accommodation reservations, meals, etc.) need to be established through liaison with all parties (typically the AB and the observer directly).

1. AMENDMENT TABLE

This table provides a summary of the changes to the document with this issue.

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| --- | --- |
| **Section(s)** | **Amendment(s)** |
| All | New issue on establishment of APAC. Document based upon APLAC MR 011 Issue 3 |
| End |  |