

APAC MRA Council – Rules for its Operation

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1. SCOPE

1.1 This document sets out the rules for the operation of the APAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) Council. It should be read in conjunction with APAC MRA-001.

1. APAC MRA COUNCIL

2.1 The APAC MRA Council is a standing committee established to coordinate APAC’s activities with respect to mutual recognition arrangements among Members.

2.2 The APAC MRA Council is authorised by the APAC Constitution (APAC GOV-001) to document and approve procedures and criteria for its operation and for the maintenance and extension of the APAC MRA.

1. COMPOSITION

3.1 Membership

3.1.1 In accordance with the APAC Constitution, representatives from all APAC members may attend the APAC MRA Council. However, only APAC Full Members are entitled to participate in voting.

3.1.2 Each Full Member of APAC shall appoint a named Delegate to the APAC MRA Council who shall have full voting rights.

3.1.3 Each Full Member may also appoint using the form APAC FMRA-010 a permanent Alternate delegate who may automatically assume the full voting rights of the Delegate in his/her absence. Additional Alternate delegates (intended to be temporary appointments to cover specific MRA Council meetings when neither the Delegate nor Alternate can attend) may be nominated by the Delegate in writing.

3.1.4 The Full Member Delegate or Alternate Delegate shall be competent for any decision-making processes of the APAC MRA Council for which they are involved. The competency criteria shall be either:

(a) the Delegate or Alternate is a Lead Evaluator, Evaluator or Provisional Evaluator; or

(b) the Delegate or Alternate has the following background and knowledge:

1. familiarity and understanding of the APAC MRA and its operation (including evaluation and decision-making procedures); and
2. understanding of, and experience in, implementing accreditation activities at managerial levels.

3.1.5 Competence based on 3.1.4 b) shall be reviewed and decided upon by the APAC MRAMC.

3.1.6 The APAC Secretariat shall maintain a list of Delegates and Alternates of the MRA Council.

3.2 Chairperson

3.2.1 The MRA Council shall elect the designated representative of one of its Full Members to act as the Chair of the MRA Council. The Position Description for the Chair is contained in APAC FPER-006. To simplify the election process, the election shall be conducted as part of the General Assembly election process for other members of the Executive Committee using the procedure outlined in APAC GOV-003 but where only Full Members nominate or vote for the MRA Council Chair.

3.2.2 The MRA Council Delegates shall elect a Vice-Chair.

3.2.3 Where the MRA Council Chair is the team leader or team member for the evaluation under consideration or when the evaluation of the MRA Council Chair’s organisation is being considered, the Vice Chair of the APAC MRA Council shall chair that part of the MRA Council meeting. In cases where both the MRA Council Chair and Vice Chair were involved in the evaluation process, or when the Vice Chair is not available to chair the meeting, the APAC Executive Committee shall appoint an acting Chair to chair that part of the meeting.

3.3 Secretariat

3.3.1 The APAC Secretariat shall provide the Secretariat for the MRA Council.

3.4 Declarations and Commitments

3.4.1 All attendees at each MRA Council meeting shall sign a declaration of confidentiality. This shall form an attachment to the minutes of the meeting.

3.4.2 At the start of each meeting the Chair shall ask delegates to declare any potential conflict of interest with any agenda item, particularly those items related to evaluation reports. Any declared potential conflict of interest shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

3.4.3 Committee members shall conduct their activities in line with the APAC Code of Conduct set out in APAC GOV-002 APAC Regulations and Codes.

1. MEETINGS AND RECORDS

4.1 Meetings

4.1.1 A Delegate/Alternate from each APAC Full Member is expected to participate in each meeting of the MRA Council.

4.1.2 In the absence of the Chair of the MRA Council, the MRA Council Vice Chair shall act as the Chair for that meeting.

4.2 Frequency

4.2.1 The MRA Council shall meet at least once per year.

4.3 Notice, agendas and working documents

4.3.1 The APAC Secretariat shall distribute a notice of each meeting confirming the date, time, venue and agenda to each member of the Committee at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting. The notice of the meeting shall also include details of the relevant supporting working papers to be discussed.

4.3.2 Meeting papers shall be distributed to each member of the Committee at least 30 days prior to the date of the meeting.

4.4 Observers

4.4.1 The Chair of the MRA Council may invite appropriate observers to attend meetings of the MRA Council. The list of observers shall form an attachment to the minutes of the meeting. Such observers shall not have voting rights or participate in decision-making.

1. MRA COUNCIL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

5.1 The MRA Council shall appoint a sub-committee to coordinate the evaluation of accreditation bodies wishing to enter or maintain signatory status in the APAC MRA. This Sub-Committee shall be named the APAC MRA Council Management Committee (APAC MRA MC).

5.2 The APAC MRA MC membership should comprise sufficient delegates to cover the accreditation programs within the APAC MRA. The Terms of Reference of the APAC MRA MC are given in APAC FGOV-017.

5.3 The APAC MRA MC shall plan, manage and oversee the conduct of APAC MRA peer evaluations using appropriate evaluation teams. The APAC MRA MC is responsible for ensuring that all accreditation bodies contribute equitably to peer evaluation teams.

5.4 The APAC MRA MC shall maintain a list of qualified lead evaluators, evaluators and provisional evaluators within APAC.

1. OPERATION OF THE MRA COUNCIL

6.1 The Chair of the APAC MRA Council shall ensure that all applications for APAC MRA signatory status are handled in an expeditious and non-discriminatory manner, and that the evaluation process is implemented in accordance with APAC MRA-001.

6.2 The APAC MRA Council shall report to each meeting of the APAC General Assembly and the APAC Executive Committee on its evaluation and re-evaluation activities.

6.3 In the event of a dispute between signatories or with applicants to the APAC MRA, the provisions of the MRA apply. The General Assembly may, however, discuss such matters and offer advice to the MRA Council.

6.4 The MRA Council shall not approve any member body for admission or continuance to the MRA before all nonconformities are closed out to the satisfaction of the evaluation team and APAC Evaluation Review Panel (ERP). When an evaluation report finalized by the APAC ERP and submitted for electronic ballot is not easily resolved electronically, the MRA Council Chair has the right to request that evaluation report be discussed at the MRA Council’s next face-to-face meeting.

6.5 During a face-to-face MRA Council meeting, the general practice is the team leader formally presents the evaluation findings to the MRA Council, and the evaluated applicant body is invited to respond. The MRA Council delegates may then seek any clarification from either the team leader or the applicant body’s delegate. Once any clarification has been given all those present from the applicant body shall be asked to leave the room. They may enter the room again after the ballot on the applicant body has been completed.

6.6 After seeking any further clarification from the team leader, the MRA Council shall decide, taking into consideration the recommendations by the evaluation team:

(a) Whether the applicant body should be accepted as a signatory to the APAC MRA or whether the signatory status for the re-evaluated signatory should be reaffirmed; and,

(b) The scope of recognition within the APAC MRA; and,

(c) The time frame for any follow-up visit and/or for the next re-evaluation; and,

(d) Decide on the meeting of the APAC MRA Council to which the report on the follow-up visit and/or next evaluation shall be presented.

6.7 The team’s recommendation shall be projected on screen for consideration by the MRA Council as a proposed resolution and edited as appropriate during the MRA Council deliberations. The agreed edited text will be framed as an MRA Council resolution which will be voted upon by the Council in accordance with the voting rules in Section 7 below.

6.8 The MRA Council may decide to impose additional conditions for entry into or continuation in the MRA on the applicant / re-evaluated body, including the provision of additional information to be provided to the MRA Council at future meeting(s); the conduct of follow-up or surveillance visits; reducing the re-evaluation interval; and/or other conditions the MRA Council considers appropriate. Such conditions will be clearly detailed in the text of the MRA Council resolution. Reasons for the additional conditions imposed shall be part of the resolution projected on screen, communicated to the applicant body representative at the meeting and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

6.9 In the case of a signatory to the APAC MRA, the APAC MRA Council may decide, if it is not able to accept the corrective actions taken by the accreditation body, to suspend MRA signatory recognition (all or in part) temporarily until it is satisfied that the nonconformity(ies) has been addressed, or to withdraw MRA signatory recognition (all or in part).

6.10 The date of the suspension of MRA signatory recognition is the date of the decision by the APAC MRA Council unless the Council decides on a different suspension date, taking into account the recommendation of the evaluation team.

6.11 In the case of suspension of MRA signatory recognition, the APAC MRA Council shall appoint a special evaluation team to conduct a follow-up visit. If the outstanding nonconformity(ies) have not been addressed satisfactorily within six months, in accordance with IAF/ILAC A2, MRA signatory status shall be withdrawn.

6.12 The date of withdrawal of APAC MRA signatory recognition is the date of the decision by the APAC MRA Council.

6.13 The accreditation body may appeal the APAC MRA Council decision in accordance with the APAC MRA Council’s appeals procedure (see Section 9).

1. VOTING RULES

7.1 The APAC MRA Council shall decide on the entry of an accreditation body into the APAC MRA or whether it may remain in the APAC MRA, subject to the appeal provisions referred to below. Three-fourths of the signatories to the MRA must cast a vote for the ballot to be valid. Abstention votes are counted as valid votes. A positive vote by three-fourths of the sum of those voting “yes” and “no” is required for the ballot to be accepted.

7.2 All APAC Full Members are entitled to a single vote in ballots on decisions.

7.2.1 During a face-to-face meeting of the MRA Council, the following signatory appointees are entitled to cast this vote:

(a) The official MRA Council Delegate or MRA Council Alternate as appointed by the APAC Full Member and listed on the MRA Council list held by the APAC Secretariat;

(b) A non-MRA Council Alternate, nominated in writing by the official MRA Council Delegate using the form APAC FMRA-010 *Nomination of Additional MRA Council Alternate*.

7.2.2 Proxy votes by the Delegate of a different signatory accreditation body on behalf of an absent Delegate are not permitted except when the evaluation team leader or evaluation team member is the only representative from a signatory accreditation body present at the MRA Council meeting. Refer to APAC MRA-008 *MRA Council Proxy Procedure*.

7.2.3 When ballots are conducted electronically (eBallots), the official MRA Council Delegate is entitled to cast this vote.

7.2.4 When the official MRA Delegate is ineligible or unable to vote, e.g. due to involvement with the evaluation or on leave, an alternate must be nominated in writing by the official MRA Council Delegate.

7.2.5 For nomination of the MRA Council Alternate email correspondence is sufficient.

7.2.6 For nomination of a non-MRA Council Alternate, the person must be nominated in writing by the official MRA Council Delegate using the form APAC FMRA-010 *Nomination of Additional MRA Council Alternate*.

7.3 Once an applicant body has been accepted as a signatory to the APAC MRA, it is permitted to vote on any new decisions. During a face-to-face MRA Council meeting, an applicant body that has been accepted as a signatory to the APAC MRA is permitted to vote on any subsequent MRA decision made during the meeting.

1. SUSPENSION OR WITHDRAWAL OF APAC MRA SIGNATORY STATUS

8.1 If the MRA Council resolves to suspend MRA signatory recognition of an accreditation body it shall decide also on the continued recognition of accredited conformity assessment bodies taking into account the reasons for the suspension.

8.2 A suspension of an APAC MRA signatory status shall only be lifted after a follow-up visit to establish that appropriate and effective corrective action has been taken, and subsequent report and recommendation from the evaluation team to the MRA Council. Financial suspensions may not require a follow-up visit of the suspended signatory.

8.3 An accreditation body whose APAC MRA signatory status has been withdrawn and wishes to regain that signatory status shall follow the same process as an applicant body, as described in APAC MRA-001.

1. APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE APAC MRA COUNCIL

9.1 Introduction

(a) An accreditation body may appeal against an APAC MRA Council decision, including not to grant signatory status in the MRA (all or in part), or to suspend or withdraw signatory status (all or in part). In such cases, the APAC MRA Council appeals process applies. As defined in the APAC Constitution (APAC GOV-001), appeals against APAC MRA Council decisions in relation to APAC MRA signatory status are handled by means of the APAC MRA Council’s Appeals Procedure.

(b) The Council must consider appeals within the boundaries of the APAC Constitution (APAC GOV-001) and the APAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (APAC MRA-002).

(c) In the case of an existing signatory, during the course of the signatory’s appeal against suspension or withdrawal of its signatory status, the signatory status shall remain in effect.

(d) Entry of an accreditation body into (or continuation in) the APAC MRA places obligations on all other signatories to the MRA to accept the accreditations of the applicant accreditation body as being equivalent to their own. Therefore, there is a fundamental right for all signatory accreditation bodies to participate in the decisions on other potential or existing signatories to the MRA. While it is acknowledged it is unusual to have appeals considered by the same people who made the original decision, it would equally be inappropriate for MRA obligations to be “imposed” following an appeal (by independent persons who would necessarily not be MRA signatories) upon signatories who have not had the opportunity to exercise their right to vote on such appeal decisions.

(e) Decisions (by voting) on MRA signatory status are formally acknowledged and recorded by the Council as MRA Council Resolutions (whether to grant or continue signatory status and under what conditions). An appeal, by its very nature, is seeking to change the decision (Resolution) and to make another one. Procedurally, this is managed by revoking (or otherwise) the original Resolution (decision) and to formulate another one, otherwise there would exist two conflicting resolutions.

(f) The following procedures set out two mechanisms by which an appellant can have the appeal considered by the Council, depending upon the time at which the appeal is submitted. If a potential appellant is in anyway unclear as to the processes described, they should seek additional briefing from the Chair of the APAC MRA Council.

9.2 Lodging an Appeal

(a) In all cases, the appeal shall be made in writing and be sent to the APAC Secretariat within 30 days of the notification of the decision of the MRA Council. The appeal shall include:

* The decision (or part thereof) of the MRA Council being appealed (as described in the MRA Council Resolution);
* Details of the basis of the accreditation body’s appeal;
* The remedy sought, including actions requested of the MRA Council and requested time frames in which such actions should be done;
* The name and title of the executive or official who will represent the accreditation body and any other person(s) who will be involved in the appeals process.

(b) The Chair of the MRA Council shall review the written appeal to establish its validity in accordance with the above, and whether the requested actions and timeframes are practical and achievable. The Chair of the MRA Council may negotiate with the appellant to define a mutually satisfactory process to consider the remedy sought.

9.3 Appeals Lodged Between MRA Council Meetings

(a) When an appeal is lodged between meetings of the MRA Council, the MRA Council Chair shall appoint within 30 days an ad-hoc appeal sub-committee to investigate the appeal. The sub-committee shall consist of at least 3 competent persons, excluding MRA Council delegates or alternates, preferably lead evaluators or experienced evaluators not part of the last evaluation team to the appellant accreditation body. The ad-hoc appeal sub-committee shall provide a written report to the MRA Council, including a recommendation on a decision. This would normally be at the next scheduled meeting of the MRA Council, but if the sub-committee has clear evidence to either uphold or rebut the appeal, they can recommend to the MRA Council Chair that the MRA Council’s decision be decided by electronic ballot.

(b) Upon receiving the report and recommendation from the ad-hoc appeal sub-committee, the MRA Council shall decide whether to uphold the appeal or otherwise, by the process described in 9.5 below.

9.4 Appeals Lodged at MRA Council Meetings

(a) When an appeal is lodged during the meeting of the MRA Council in which the decision in dispute was made, the appellant may request the appeal be considered at that meeting (or may choose that the procedures in 9.3 above be followed). This request shall be reviewed by the Chair of the MRA Council. The Chair shall also inform the appellant of the procedures the Council will use to consider the appeal and seek the appellant’s agreement or otherwise clarify any queries the appellant may have. Should the request to consider the appeal at this meeting be practical and achievable, the consideration of the appeal shall be by the full MRA Council in attendance at the meeting.

9.5 Consideration of appeals by the MRA Council

(a) The MRA Council shall decide within 6 months whether to uphold the appeal or otherwise, by means of a vote in accordance with Section 7.1 above. Such votes shall be confined to decisions “on the entry of an accreditation body into the APAC MRA (all or in part) or whether or not it may remain in the APAC MRA (all or in part)”. The wording of a resolution for voting shall be confined to such decisions.

(b) In general, the following process will be applied but may be adjusted by the Chair of the MRA Council (with the agreement of the Council) to suit the particular circumstance.

(i) At meetings of the MRA Council:

* The appellant accreditation body shall present the appeal to the Council along with any additional information they wish to provide in support of the appeal;
* The Council will consider the report and recommendation from the ad-hoc sub-committee (where relevant);
* The MRA Council delegates may then seek any clarification from the appellant, the ad-hoc sub-committee, and/or the evaluation team leader (if present);
* Once any clarification has been given, the Council should review in a stepwise manner all the issues under consideration and the remedies sought by the appellant (to ensure there are no misunderstandings). When completed, all those present from the appellant accreditation body shall be asked to leave the room. They may enter the room again once the ballot on the appeal has been completed;
* Following any additional discussion within the Council, a Resolution to revoke the original decision (Resolution) should be voted upon. If such a Resolution is not passed (i.e. that the original decision is not to be revoked) this essentially means that the appeal is not upheld, and the Council will inform the appellant at the meeting;
* If the Resolution passes (i.e. the Council revokes the original decision), a new decision (Resolution) shall be formulated and balloted. Such new decisions could be formulated taking into consideration the original recommendation from the evaluation team, the remedy sought by the appellant in the lodged appeal and the recommendation of the ad-hoc subcommittee (where relevant), but the Council may choose to modify these at its discretion until a new decision is agreed.

(ii) When considered electronically:

* The APAC Secretariat shall distribute to MRA Council delegates the written appeal (as detailed in Section 9.2(a) above) together with any additional information the appellant accreditation body wishes to provide in support of the appeal;
* The MRA Council delegates will consider the report and recommendation from the ad-hoc sub-committee (where relevant);
* The MRA Council delegates may then seek, through the APAC Secretariat, any clarification from the appellant, the ad-hoc sub-committee, and/or the evaluation team leader;
* Once any clarification has been given, the MRA Council delegates should review all the issues under consideration and the remedies sought by the appellant;
* Following any necessary additional discussion, a Resolution to revoke the original decision (Resolution) shall be balloted. If such a Resolution is not passed (i.e. that the original decision is not to be revoked) this essentially means that the appeal is not upheld, and the Chair of the MRA Council will inform the appellant;
* If the Resolution passes (i.e. the Council revokes the original decision), a new decision (Resolution) shall be formulated by the Chair of the MRA Council and balloted. Such new decisions could be formulated taking into consideration the original recommendation from the evaluation team, the remedy sought by the appellant in the lodged appeal and the recommendation of the ad-hoc subcommittee (where relevant), but the Council may choose to modify these at its discretion until a new decision is agreed.

(c) The MRA Council’s decision on the appeal shall be final.

9.6 The APAC Secretariat shall advise the appellant in writing within 5 days of the outcome of the APAC MRA Council resolution.

9.7 Records as listed in Appendix 1 to APAC MS-001 shall be retained.

1. NOTIFICATION OF SUSPENSION OR WITHDRAWAL OF APAC MRA SIGNATORY STATUS

10.1 In the event that the APAC MRA Council suspends or withdraws the MRA signatory recognition of an accreditation body, the MRA Council Chair shall promptly advise the accreditation body of this and provide a detailed explanation of the reasons for the decision. The MRA Council Chair shall also advise whether the Council has also resolved to suspend recognition by the other signatories to the MRA of the equivalence of endorsed reports and certificates issued by conformity assessment bodies accredited by the suspended accreditation body, including prior to addressing any appeals procedure. Any such suspension of recognition shall not be considered as a breach of APAC MRA obligations (APAC MRA-002).

10.2 The change in signatory status shall apply from the date of the APAC MRA Council resolution on the matter, unless otherwise decided as part of the MRA Council resolution.

10.3 The APAC Secretariat shall promptly advise other signatories to the APAC MRA and the IAF and ILAC Secretariats of the change in MRA signatory status of the accreditation body. The accreditation body’s scope of recognition shall be amended (or removed in the case of full suspension) in the list of APAC MRA signatories (APAC FGOV-011), and on the APAC web site. An announcement on the change in signatory status shall also be placed on the web site.

10.4 The other signatories to the APAC MRA should advise all relevant organisations in their own economy of the change in APAC MRA signatory status of the accreditation body.

10.5 The accreditation body itself should advise its applicant and accredited conformity assessment bodies, and all relevant organisations in its own economy of its change in APAC MRA signatory status and of the subsequent impact on the acceptance of its accreditations by APAC MRA signatories.

1. PROCEDURES FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE APAC MRA

11.1 Proposals to Extend the APAC MRA

11.1.1 Proposals to extend the APAC MRA into other areas of accreditation can originate from a variety of sources:

(a) Individual APAC Members

Accreditation bodies themselves may need confirmation of competence in accreditation activities not currently covered by the APAC MRA – either entirely new areas of accreditation, or in areas which are complementary to areas already accredited by them (e.g. historically, laboratory accreditation bodies needed confidence in calibration laboratories in support of accreditation of testing laboratories). Likewise, confidence in Reference Material Producers (RMP) and Proficiency Testing Providers (PTP) was needed to support the accreditation of all laboratory types and prompted inclusion of the recognition of accreditation bodies that accredit RMP and PTP in the APAC MRA.

(b) Other Regional Groups, IAF or ILAC

Extension of the MLAs/MRAs in other Regional Groups, IAF or ILAC may prompt APAC to follow suit or to extend its MRA in support of these other developments.

(c) Conformity Assessment Bodies (or groups thereof)

These groups may need independent recognition of their competence (especially outside of their own economy) for activities not currently addressed by APAC (or IAF, ILAC or other parties).

(d) Other Stakeholders such as Regulators, Trade Bodies, Industry or Professional Associations

Such groups may be seeking reassurance of the technical competence of organisations against commonly agreed criteria not currently addressed by APAC (or IAF, ILAC or other parties).

11.1.2 Proposals to extend the APAC MRA will usually be taken up at a meeting of the APAC MRA Council.

11.2 Review of Proposals to Extend the APAC MRA

11.2.1 The initial high-level review of a proposal will be conducted by the MRA Council and will focus on the appropriateness of extending the APAC MRA into the new area (see APAC FMRA-020).

11.2.2 The MRA Council shall consider either electronically or at a face-to-face meeting, as appropriate and relevant, the following questions:

(a) The Accreditation Standard(s)

1. Is there an established accreditation standard or normative document covering the conformity assessment activity, or for the attestation of competence of the bodies subject to accreditation? Is the standard or document credible and robust, for example, has it been produced by an international consensus process involving relevant interested parties?
2. If not, is APAC prepared to develop and publish such a document?

(b) The Accreditation Activity

1. With reference to ILAC-R6 *Structure of the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement and Procedure for Expansion of the Scope of the ILAC Arrangement* or IAF PR4 *Structure of the IAF MLA and List of IAF Endorsed Normative Documents*, at what level in the structure of the APAC MRA does the standard or normative document (and associated accreditation activity) reside?
   * Documents and activities in Level 4 (which would typically be of a sectorial specific nature) would not usually require a formal extension of, and recognition under, the APAC MRA and are not explicitly covered under these procedures. However, the general principles could be applied on a case-by-case basis as appropriate should a sector’s stakeholders seek a formal mechanism for the recognition of APAC MRA signatory accreditation bodies operating within the sector.
   * Documents and activities in Levels 2 and 3 would normally require formal extension of the APAC MRA.
2. For Level 2 accreditation activities:
   * Is the activity consistent with APAC’s core objectives, as set out in the APAC Constitution (APAC GOV-001)?
   * Is the activity more consistent with the accreditation activity covered by other Regional Groups?
   * Is it of sufficient substance to enhance recognition of competence?
   * Does it dilute the substance of any existing standard under the APAC MRA?
3. For Level 3 accreditation activities:
   * Does the activity have significant relevance to the accreditation of CABs involved in related activities? Is it complementary to or supportive of other standards being used (particularly Level 2 standards)?
   * Is it of sufficient substance to enhance recognition of competence?
   * Does it dilute the substance of any existing standard under the APAC MRA?
4. Can the operation (by a member accreditation body) of an accreditation programme for the new activity be conducted in accordance with the general principles of ISO/IEC 17011? Is ISO/IEC 17011 an appropriate base standard for the operation of such a programme?

(c) APAC’s Internal Considerations

1. Does the lack of inclusion of the accreditation activity in the APAC MRA pose a threat to or undermine APAC’s status within the international accreditation community?
2. Will APAC be able to effectively evaluate an accreditation body using the existing general principles and procedures for peer evaluations? What form of evaluation will be necessary for existing signatories to extend their scope into the new area? For example, Level 2 activities would be expected to have a full on-site evaluation with witnessing; Level 3 activities may not require as comprehensive of an evaluation depending on stakeholder expectations, technical complexity, technical similarity with (or difference from) existing standards, or other risk factors.
3. Is there sufficient interest from the APAC membership to participate in and be recognised under an extended MRA?
4. Will the extended area under the APAC MRA be ‘owned’ (in full or in part) by (an) external stakeholder(s)?
   * Does the APAC membership wish to operate the APAC MRA under such arrangements?
   * Do the requirements of the stakeholder(s) threaten the impartiality and independence of APAC MRA signatories, i.e. conformity with ISO/IEC 17011 and other existing MRA requirements?
   * Do the requirements of the stakeholder(s) threaten the impartiality and independence of APAC, i.e. as set out in the APAC Constitution, and conformity with IAF/ILAC-A1 and other existing IAF MLA or ILAC MRA requirements?

v. How many applicant accreditation bodies would need to successfully complete evaluation activities in the extended area before an extended MRA can be signed (e.g. historically this has been a minimum of 4 signatories)?

11.3 Approval to Extend the APAC MRA

(a) On completion of the initial high-level review, the MRA Council will decide whether to confirm the extension. The initial high-level review by the MRA Council may take several meetings to come to a decision as information is gathered and considered.

(b) In accordance with APAC’s obligations under ILAC-P12 Harmonisation of ILAC Work with the Regions, once a decision to extend the APAC MRA has been made, APAC shall inform ILAC and the other Regional Groups, and the ILAC unaffiliated bodies (via the ILAC Executive Committee) of the new work item and invite participation in the work from outside the APAC region.

11.4 Development of an Extended MRA

11.4.1 Prior to acceptance of any applications for member bodies to enter the extended MRA, the MRA Council shall ensure it has the appropriate infrastructure to effectively administer an extended MRA. It shall establish an ad-hoc Working Group to oversee, coordinate and/or conduct the following activities to this end:

(a) Review any related activities in other regions (including ILAC/IAF) and include any learning in the development work to be undertaken by the MRA Council to avoid duplication of effort and ensure consistency.

(b) Analyse the potential for problems in the new area associated with the application of existing requirements documents on accreditation body signatories under the APAC MRA, e.g. but not necessarily limited to:

1. ISO/IEC 17011
2. IAF/ILAC-A2 and IAF/ILAC-A5
3. APAC MRA-001
4. IAF and ILAC requirements
5. Expressions of scopes of accreditation (for any accreditation bodies already accrediting in the new area), which are a common source of inconsistency and should also be considered.

Anticipated problems shall be brought to the MRA Council for resolution.

(c) Analyse the potential for problems in the new area associated with the interpretation and application of the accreditation standard(s) or normative document(s) by accreditation bodies in the assessment and accreditation of applicant organisations. Anticipated problems shall be brought to the MRA Council, who typically will request resolution through the appropriate APAC Technical Committee. Additional criteria and/or guidance documents may be required before the extended MRA can be implemented.

(d) In association with the APAC MRA MC, identify what evaluator resources will be required to evaluate accreditation bodies in the new area. In particular, what additional competencies will be required (if any and from those currently held by APAC evaluators in the evaluator pool), and how these competencies will need to be demonstrated and recorded. If necessary, evaluator training may need to be undertaken in association with the APAC MRA MC.

(e) In association with the APAC MRA MC, review the APAC MRA-series of documents to identify and implement changes needed to administer the new scope of the MRA.

(f) Once the key documentation allowing effective administration of the extended MRA is in place, in association with the APAC MRA MC, recruit, train if necessary, and qualify sufficient evaluators to evaluate possible future applicant accreditation bodies.

(g) In association with the APAC committees, the APAC Secretariat and/or the Executive Committee arrange for other APAC documents to be reviewed to identify and implement changes needed to reflect the extended MRA.

11.4.2 The ad-hoc Working Group shall report regularly to the MRA Council, including any items requiring decision/resolution. Once developments are sufficiently advanced (typically up to and including 11.4.1(f) above) the MRA Council will decide when applications to enter the extended MRA can be accepted. Applications would be open to any APAC Full Member and processed according to the established (or as revised under 11.2.2(c)(ii) and/or 11.4.1(e) above) process described in APAC MRA-001.

11.4.3 The MRA Council shall dissolve the ad-hoc Working Group upon completion of its set tasks in Section 11.4.1, or otherwise maintain it under revised terms of reference.

1. AMENDMENT TABLE

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

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| **Date** | **Section(s)** | **Amendment(s)** |
| 31/01/2021 | 11.3 (a) | Amendment to confirm the MRA Council can approve extensions to the MRA, and the unnecessary duplicate approval by the APAC General Assembly is not required. |
| 09/07/2020 | 6.4 | Minor editorial to remove reference to ‘concerns’ as no longer included in IAF/ILAC A3 report template. |
| 19/10/2019 | 6.6 | Removed reference to “in relation to any significant nonconformity(ies)”, as this wording was ambiguous and was questioned in a follow-up from the IAF/ILAC evaluation team. |
| 24/07/2019 | 6.6 | Changed to reflect IAF/ILAC A2, and DM NC01 from the IAF/ILAC evaluation of APAC, that states the maximum suspension period is 6 months after which MRA status is to be withdrawn. |
| 16/06/2019 | 3.1.5, 9.3 | Minor changes to address IAF/ILAC Regional Evaluation findings. |
| 1/3/2019 | 3.1.4 | Amended to require the APAC MRA MC to confirm competence of APAC MRA Council Delegates and Alternates, in response to ILAC findings during the evaluation of APLAC in 2018. |
| 1/1/2019 | All | New issue on establishment of APAC. |