

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** **General**

9.1.1 An appeal is a request by an APAC MRA signatory for reconsideration of APAC MRA Council decision.

9.1.2 During the course of the signatory’s appeal against suspension or withdrawal of its signatory status, the signatory’s MRA status shall remain in effect, unless otherwise determined by the APAC Council.

9.1.3 APAC and its assigned personnel shall act in a fair, impartial and non-discriminatory manner.

9.1.4 APAC shall ensure that the assigned personnel have not been previously involved in the previous activities related to the appeal.

9.1.5 The appeals process is shown as follows:

**Appeal Process – Flowchart**

* 1. Responsibilities

9.2.1 Appeals are to be handled by the APAC MRA Council Chair who can be supported for the appeal process by the APAC MRA Management Committee (MRAMC), the APAC Quality Manager, the APAC Secretariat and/or the APAC Executive Committee.

9.2.2 APAC MRA Council Chair is responsible for appointment of the Appeal Panel (9.3.4).

9.2.3 In cases where a conflict of interest exist, the APAC MRA Council Chair may delegate this task to the APAC MRA Council Vice Chair, or to another APAC MRAMC Member.

9.2.4 The APAC Secretariat has the responsibility for receipting, recording, acknowledging and communicating the outcome of appeals.

* 1. Procedure

9.3.1 Lodging an appeal

9.3.1.1 An appeal must be lodged to the APAC Secretariat by the appellant within 30-days of the date of notification of the APAC MRA Council decision.

9.3.1.2 All appeals shall be addressed in writing to the APAC MRA Council Chair using the APAC FMS-011 and accompanied by the following information:

1. the decision of the MRA Council being appealed;

1. the specific grounds for the appeal including reference to the relevant specific clauses of ISO/IEC 17011 and/or the APAC MRA procedures, and documentation sufficiently comprehensive to support the appeal and enable consideration of the matter by an independent Appeal Panel

1. the remedy sought, including actions requested of the APAC MRA Council; and,
2. the name and title of the appellant’s authorised person (normally the APAC MRA Council Delegate) who will represent the accreditation body and any other person(s) who will be involved in the appeals process.

9.3.1.3 An appellant may wish to withdraw its appeal at any stage of the appeal process. Once withdrawn the appeal cannot be re-submitted.

**9.3.2 Receipt, eligibility and acknowledgement of an appeal**

9.3.2.1 Upon receipt of any appeal, the APAC Secretariat shall initially check the completeness of the appeal form and associated documentation and forward it to the APAC MRA Council Chair to determine its eligibility.

9.3.2.2 In determining the eligibility of the appeal, the APAC MRA Council Chair may seek the assistance of the APAC Quality Manager and may discuss the matter with the appellant, the MRAMC, or any other person associated with the matter.

9.3.2.3 The APAC MRA Council Chair will inform the appellant, APAC Quality Manager, APAC Secretariat and the APAC Executive Committee whether the appeal is determined to be eligible or ineligible. If ineligible the APAC MRA Council Chair shall state the reason for that determination. All appeals are recorded by the Secretariat in the APAC FMS-009 Appeals Register.

9.3.2.4 From receipt of a fully completed appeal with associated documentation, the determination of eligibility and any subsequent acknowledgement of the appeal should be completed within 30 days.

**9.3.4 Appointment of the Appeal Panel**

9.3.4.1 The APAC MRA Council Chair shall appoint an Appeal Panel within 30 days of the acknowledgement of the appeal, including an Appeal Panel Convenor, and inform the APAC Quality Manager.

9.3.4.2 The Appeal Panel shall consist of at least 3-members that:

1. have not been part of the Evaluation Team or Evaluation Review Panel associated with the APAC MRA Council decision that is the subject of the appeal;
2. are, as far as possible, competent in the scope of the appeal (e.g. APAC evaluators or persons from other regional cooperations that have competencies in the relevant scope(s) of accreditation); and,
3. have signed APAC FGOV-007 Confidentiality and Commitment Declaration.

9.3.4.3 The APAC Quality Manager shall inform the appellant about the nomination of the Appeal Panel. The appellant has an opportunity to object on any member nominated in the panel on the basis of valid reason(s) within 7 days from the date of being notified.

9.3.4.4 In case of any objection(s), the APAC MRA Council Chair shall determine if the reason(s) for objection are acceptable and, if necessary, determine the replacement member(s).

**9.3.5 Review, determination and recommendation on the appeal**

9.3.5.1 The appointed Appeal Panel shall:

1. review the material upon which the appealed APAC MRA Council decision was based;
2. review the appeal form and any associated documentation provided by the appellant in support of its appeal; and,
3. determine whether, on the basis of information referred to in (a) and (b), the APAC MRA Council decision was:
4. valid at the time the decision was made based on the information provided at that time; and,
5. whether that decision should be revoked or upheld based on the information reviewed during the appeal process.

9.3.5.2 In undertaking their review and determination the Appeal Panel can:

1. seek any further information it considers necessary from any person;
2. communicate with the appellant and hear the appeal from the appellant’s perspective;
3. request additional resources and activities (e.g. input from technical experts, translation or interpretative assistance, or legal advice).

9.3.5.3 As soon as the review is completed and a determination made, the Appeal Panel shall prepare a recommendation on the appeal for APAC MRA Council ballot. The draft recommendation shall be sent to the APAC MRA Council Chair and APAC Quality Manager for comment prior to finalisation.

9.3.5.4 The final recommendation will be adopted within the Appeal Panel on the basis of a simple majority.

9.3.5.5 The final recommendation shall state:

1. the determination of the Appeals Panel;
2. whether the appeal, or parts of the appeal, are upheld or rejected;
3. the reasons for the recommendation; and,
4. any actions that are to be undertaken by the appellant.

9.3.5.6 The time taken by the Appeal Panel to review, determine and finalise their recommendation on the appeal should not exceed 60 days. The APAC MRA Council Chair may extend this time if required.

9.3.6 APAC MRA Council ballot on appeal recommendations and notification of result

9.3.6.1 The final recommendation shall be provided to the APAC MRA Council for an approval ballot. The ballot will include reference to the original MRA Council decision.

9.3.6.2 The ballot process will be in accordance with clause 7. Voting Rules.

9.3.6.3 The APAC secretariat shall announce the ballot result within 7 days of the ballot closing. The decision by the APAC MRA Council is final and binding.

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)** |
| 20/02/2023 | 9.0 | Editorial and administrative changes after experience with the processing of APAC first MRA appeal. |
| 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. |