

Laboratory Accreditation

IS-7

INAB offers laboratories accreditation to the international standard **ISO/IEC 17025:2005** "General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories". This standard contains requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories and is used by laboratories in developing a management system for quality, administrative and technical operations.

The Standard is applicable to all laboratories regardless of the number of personnel or the extent of the scope of testing and/or calibration activities. It requires laboratories to establish and maintain a quality system to manage aspects such as document control, complaint handling, contract review, purchasing, audits and investigation into non-conforming testing/calibrations. In addition, the laboratory is required to have policies and procedures to describe training, test/calibration methods, quality assurance, reporting and measurement traceability.

INAB has accredited laboratories from the private and public sectors. Private laboratories are sometimes stand-alone operations that are actively seeking work and service Irish industry and the public through the provision of accredited testing and calibration operations. Such laboratories are used by industry when meeting their own requirements or when complying with regulatory or industry specifications. Accreditation gives users of laboratories confidence in the quality of the service provided. Other laboratories in the private sector are part of bigger organisations such as larger pharmaceutical corporations which can require accreditation in order to ensure the quality of results reported when complying with environmental legislation or for other corporate reasons. In the public sector there is sometimes a requirement for organisations to gain accreditation for the specific field in which they operate such as public health laboratories which test food and water samples collected by environmental health officers for various pathogens.

Accreditation of calibration laboratories underpins the national measurement system by ensuring the competence of these providers. Traceability to national and ultimately to international standards is a vital cog of any economy operating in the international sphere.

An accredited calibration laboratory has demonstrated competence for the calibration of instruments/equipment within a specific range of measurement and to a precise uncertainty.

In recent years there has been growth in laboratory accreditation in response to requirements imposed by third parties e.g. requirements for laboratories that undertake testing of the materials used in the construction of roads to be accredited for these tests. Health and safety concerns have seen growth in areas such as asbestos testing, food safety and water quality.

INAB applicant and accredited Laboratories are required to implement in full the requirements of ISO 17025 and associated EA, ILAC¹ and INAB mandatory documents, which can be accessed from the INAB website at www.inab.ie

Laboratories are accredited in compliance with ISO 17025 for a defined range of activities and these are detailed in a scope of accreditation which is annexed to the organisation's accreditation certificate. Laboratories accredited by INAB cover testing in areas such as: chemical: biological; mechanical: heat and temperature; metrology; electrical; and construction materials.

A directory of these scopes of accreditation is maintained by INAB and is available from the INAB website.

Once the Laboratory has all of the organisational and technical measures in place, and has been operating a laboratory service for a period of time sufficient to have historical records built up, and to be able to demonstrate that the operation is stable (typically three months minimum), it can apply to INAB for accreditation.

The process for the accreditation of laboratories is fully described in INAB Publication P7, also available from the INAB website.

For further information please contact INAB at:

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¹ EA is the European Co-operation for Accreditation
ILAC is the International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation