

# **Proceedings of the Institute of Acoustics**

## **THE PROCESS OF NAMAS ACCREDITATION**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

NAMAS is the acronym for the National Measurement Accreditation Service. It was formed in 1985 by the amalgamation of the British Calibration Service (BCS, established in 1966 to accredit calibration laboratories) and the National Testing Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (NATLAS, established in 1981 to accredit testing laboratories).

Accreditation by NAMAS means recognition of the technical competence of a laboratory in providing calibration/testing services meeting the stringent requirements of the NAMAS Accreditation Standard.

Laboratories accredited by NAMAS also meet the requirements of the International Standard ISO Guide 25 and European Standard EN 45001. NAMAS accredited laboratories may also be considered as meeting those requirements concerned with the adequacy of calibration or testing, contained in the ISO 9000, EN 29000 and BS 5750 series standards relating to quality assurance in manufacture and similar activities.

NAMAS accreditation is voluntary and is open to any laboratories that carry out objective measurement and testing. In addition, since April 1991, NAMAS also offers accreditation for sampling activities.

The principle aims of NAMAS are:

- to provide a national, unified laboratory accreditation service which establishes widespread recognition of the competence of accredited calibration and testing organisations
- to improve the authority and standard of calibration and testing within the UK and thereby enhance the quality and reputation of British goods in markets at home and abroad
- to eliminate multiple assessment of calibration and testing organisations
- to negotiate agreements on mutual recognition with other national accreditation bodies and thereby obtain international acceptance of accredited testing and calibration organisations
- to provide publicity for accredited organisations and a service to their users through the publication of a NAMAS Directory of Accredited Laboratories

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### **Charges for Accreditation**

Fees are payable at the relevant stages of accreditation by laboratories seeking accreditation and further details are given in the NAMAS publication P4, NAMAS Charges.

### **Process of Accreditation**

To become eligible for accreditation, a laboratory needs to demonstrate to NAMAS that it operates a quality system that meets the requirements of NAMAS and that it has the required technical competence to carry out the calibration/testing activities stated in its proposed scope of accreditation.

The route to accreditation follows the stages described below.

#### **STAGE 1 - Subscription to NAMAS Publications**

The publication package includes a set of NAMAS documents which provide essential information to laboratories relating to application and preparation for accreditation.

#### **STAGE 2 - Formal Application for Accreditation**

The formal application should only be made when

- the quality system, considered to be meeting the requirements of NAMAS, is formalised into a Quality Manual
- a proposed schedule of accreditation is defined

Upon the receipt of a completed application and quality manual and an application fee, a Technical Officer will be appointed to manage the accreditation process.

#### **STAGE 3 - Pre-assessment Visit**

The pre-assessment visit is a relatively informal meeting between the NAMAS team (the Technical Officer and the Lead Assessor if one is appointed at this stage) and the laboratory management.

The objectives of the visit are:

- to establish whether the laboratory is in a position to proceed to formal assessment with good prospects of a successful accreditation outcome. The NAMAS team will endeavour to identify any potential problems which may hinder the assessment
- to explain to laboratory, the approach and conduct of the assessment and answer any questions concerning NAMAS policies and requirements
- to discuss the proposed scope of accreditation

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- to identify NAMAS requirements for additional assessors for the formal assessment

### **STAGE 4 - The Formal Assessment**

Prior to the assessment, the Technical Officer will send a programme detailing the aspects of activities to be examined.

The actual assessment will comprise three phases:

- an introductory meeting between the NAMAS team and the management in which the conduct of the assessment will be explained
- the actual assessment during which the assessment team will examine the laboratory's operations in detail against the requirements of the NAMAS Accreditation Standard, M10 and other relevant documents. Non-compliances are formally noted by the assessors.
- a final meeting in which the findings of the assessment team will be presented to the management, in particular, the status regarding readiness for accreditation will also be presented. The statement is frequently that the laboratory should be accredited subject to any non-compliances found at the assessment being remedied within an agreed timescale. Where possible, documentary evidence of corrective actions may be provided by post. where the non-compliances found are of a serious nature, a further visit by NAMAS may be necessary.

### **STAGE 5 - Grant of Accreditation**

Once the corrective actions undertaken by the laboratory are considered to be satisfactory and the non-compliances resolved, the Head of NAMAS will consider the application and the outcome of the assessment and formally grant accreditation to the laboratory on behalf of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The laboratory will then be able to use the NAMAS Logo on its test or calibration reports, publicity and stationery materials.

### **Life After Accreditation**

After accreditation, laboratories are visited at regular intervals to ensure that they are continuing to comply with the accreditation criteria. The first surveillance is carried out six months after the award of accreditation and thereafter annually. A full reassessment takes place after every fourth year.

### **Assessors**

Whilst Technical Officers may act as assessors in areas where they possess the technical expertise, however, NAMAS primarily obtains its assessors from private sector companies, government departments, the universities, etc. All potential assessors must meet stringent requirements in terms of formal qualifications and technical experience and they must also successfully complete the NAMAS Assessor Training Course before carrying out assessments.

