

NOTICE TO CALA ACCREDITED LABORATORIES (MULTIPLE TIER CALIBRATIONS)

Non-traceable calibrations

Accredited laboratories are reminded that they should acquire traceability from competent calibration service providers, and with few exceptions for an analytical laboratory, that means the calibration laboratory is accredited by a body recognized by CALA. See CALA A61 - CALA Traceability Policy (http://www.cala.ca/A61-CALA_Trac.pdf) on how to identify competent calibration laboratories.

In the past some CALA accredited testing laboratories were required to redo some expensive calibration work because the certificate provided by the accredited calibration service provider, although clearly marked as "TRACEABLE TO NIST" was not traceable as defined by ISO/IEC 17025 and ILAC P10 (<http://www.cala.ca/Ilac-p10-2002.pdf>). These certificates were missing two of the elements required to meet ISO/IEC 17025 traceability requirements, measurement uncertainty and the accreditation body's logo.

It is known that many accredited calibration laboratories delivering accredited calibrations do not include all of the elements of an accredited calibration (as defined in ILAC P10), because those clients do not want them. For example:

- Not all calibrations are performed as "accredited". Every order received by most accredited calibration laboratories is subjected to contract review to determine if the lab customer references ISO/IEC 17025 for the conduct of the work. In other words, has the lab customer stated that they need this calibration to be traceable according to the terms of ISO/IEC 17025?
- Since not all customers of accredited calibration laboratories request (or are required to meet) ISO/IEC 17025 requirements, certificates may be issued to them that fall short of the requirements given in ISO/IEC 17025 / A61 - CALA Traceability Policy.
- This has happened to CALA - accredited laboratories because it was not clear to the accredited calibration laboratories that their CALA lab customers needed calibrations meeting traceability requirements as defined in ISO/IEC 17025 or CALA A61.
- All instances have been successfully addressed by the accredited calibration laboratories, once it became known that the issue existed.

In most instances these cases come to light during an assessment. CALA labs are reminded that it is important to select a calibration source using the calibration laboratory's published scope of accreditation (see A61, Section 8.5) and not select them solely because they are accredited. Selection should be based on the accredited calibration laboratory being accredited for the specific type of instrument that needs calibration - as shown on their scope of accreditation.

A good idea is a better solution

In order to better meet Canadian customers quality requirements whenever a calibration is requested either new or recalibration, some accredited calibration laboratories have their Customer Service Representatives (CSR's) ask the following questions whenever a laboratory requests calibration from them:

1. Does your laboratory perform drug testing?
2. Does your laboratory perform food testing?
3. Does your laboratory perform environmental testing?
4. Is your laboratory accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 or by CALA?

If, the answer is YES to any of these than the CSR will ask the customer whether the calibration is required to be performed in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025. If the answer is YES the CSR will annotate this on the order. If this is not on the order an associate will be required to contact the end user prior to starting the work.

Be aware that this can also apply to an item being returned for repair. Do not assume that all items repaired will automatically be recalibrated.

This proactive approach by some accredited calibration laboratories will help CALA-accredited laboratories meet the requirements of A61 by ensuring that the discussion between the CALA member lab and a competent accredited laboratory contains all of the information required to make correct decisions.

It is hoped that more accredited calibration laboratories will use similar approaches in the delivery of their services.

For any questions on this issue, please contact Ned Gravel, Manager Quality and Training at CALA. ngravel@cala.ca, 613-233-5500.