

A140-01 - CALA POLICY ON REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

Revision 1.1
July 23, 2020



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Accreditation bodies can use other assessment techniques other than on-site, as long as the technique achieves the same objective as an on-site and the accreditation body can justify the use of such techniques (ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Section 7.9.3). Other assessment techniques include but are not limited to:

- Remote assessments;
- Witnessing the performance of sampling and/or testing activities;
- Document review;
- File review;
- Review of proficiency testing and other interlaboratory results;
- Unannounced visits; and,
- Interviews.

A remote assessment is defined as the assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a laboratory using electronic means (ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Section 3.26); a note to this entry clarifies that a virtual site is an online environment allowing persons to execute processes (e.g., in a cloud environment).

Remote assessments were specifically developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but may be considered for use under other circumstances, including but not limited to the following scenarios:

- Travel to a laboratory or specific location is not reasonable (e.g., safety reasons, travel restrictions).
- The laboratory has a system-wide implementation of its management system where documents, records, data, etc..can be reviewed at any site, despite where the work is being performed.
- The assessment is for an extension to a scope of accreditation (i.e., an abbreviated visit) and the laboratory has the same or similar competencies on its accredited scope of testing.

In all cases, the underlying principle is that the assessment activity is of a low risk level to CALA. For this reason, initial assessments or extensions of scope where the competency is new to the laboratory are not permitted using a remote assessment process.

The objective of the remote assessment is the same as any assessment - to establish the level of confidence in the laboratory's testing processes by direct observations. The only difference is that the assessment is carried out through an electronic medium.

2.0 POLICY

A remote assessment may be undertaken following a risk-based decision-making process undertaken by CALA staff. If an assessment is able to be carried out remotely, it is CALA policy that:

- The laboratory shall have key staff available for the duration of the remote assessment, including someone from management, a person responsible for implementation of the management system, and analysts that routinely perform the tests in question.
- The laboratory shall have appropriate devices with cameras and allow these devices into the laboratory in order to facilitate appropriate witnessing of equipment and processes.
- The laboratory shall provide requested documents and records to the assessor in a timely manner. These documents and records will be over and above those that are located in the FTP folder six (6) weeks prior to the visit, as per the normal process.
- A nonconformity will be raised in the event that information cannot be shared remotely (i.e., due to confidentiality or access issues). The nonconformity can be addressed when the laboratory is responding to findings.
- The assessor may terminate the assessment prior to the schedule due to an inability to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during a virtual meeting.
- CALA may decide at any time throughout the process if an on-site visit is required instead of, or in addition to, a remote assessment. The remote assessment is meant to complement traditional on-site processes – not replace them.

3.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision No.	Revision Date	Revision
1.0	May 04, 2020	Document published.
1.1	July 23, 2020	Changed document control number to A140-01 (with the publication of an associated guidance document A140-02).