

## Summary of the A2LA Criteria Council Meeting

(Sunday, March 13, 2005)

The A2LA Criteria Council (CC) meeting was held on Sunday, March 13, 2005 at the Sheraton Columbia Hotel in Columbia, MD.

1. Introduction (4:00 P.M.)

The Criteria Council Chair, Ken Stoub, welcomed all attendees and completed an overview of the CC meeting agenda. Kathy Burns was introduced since this was her first meeting. Alex Klein is now the Chair of the Accreditation Council and was conducting that meeting during the same time and could not be present.

G. Cornell asked to remain a member of the Criteria Council even though his term as Chair of the Materials Testing Advisory Committee has expired.

**ACTION: K. Stoub to request at the Board of Directors (BOD) meeting on Monday, March 14, 2005, that G. Cornell be allowed to maintain participation within the Criteria Council (by March 14, 2005).**

2. Technical Advisory Committees

a. Life Sciences Advisory Committee (LSAC) - Presented by M. Miller, Chair of the LSAC. Issues brought forward from the LSAC included:

- It was suggested that certain terms be defined through a sub-committee with examples on how the life science labs will use these pieces of equipment. This issue involves reviewing T1 and T9 of the *Traceability Policy*. Staff has been requested not to change the policy until the subcommittee has reviewed the information and issued a decision for the CC to review and approve.

K. Stoub suggested that possibly two traceability policies be created – one for testing and one for calibration.

- Discussion took place on whether or not stack testing accreditation is an opportunity that we should consider. The LSAC voted to continue to assess these labs to ISO/IEC 17025 alone; therefore, the environmental and NELAC requirements will not be used. Also, this form of testing should be kept under the chemical field. However, it was suggested by the LSAC that additional requirements (similar to our putting green or environmental lead (Pb) requirements) may need to be added to ISO/IEC 17025-1999 so that the important components of the ASTM methods are included, if stack testing accreditation is to be considered. However, the majority of the stack testers do not want accreditation. Cost is a significant issue, as is the liability coverage that is required for this activity. Additional training will be

required that could cost A2LA a significant amount of money. The LSAC ultimately voted that stack testing should not be considered as a possible field-testing requirement. P. Unger informed the CC that R. Query is periodically reviewing the information from the stack testing industry to determine if there is a potential market. A discussion was held regarding the amount of training that will be required for the assessors. A2LA only has two assessors with this capability and due to the conflict of interest (working for competitors), they may not be allowed into the laboratories. In addition, there is the potential liability that exists for the assessors (climbing the stacks, etc.).

It was pointed out that the liability for the 3 laboratories that we currently accredit still exists even without the additional requirements, and it was agreed that this is beyond the risk that we normally take.

- A sub-committee was formed in order to review the proficiency testing participation requirements for better clarification.
- b. Materials Testing Advisory Committee (MTAC) - Presented by G. Cornell, Chair of the MTAC. Issues brought forward from the MTAC included:

- F. Fetterolf will be the next Chair of the MTAC with M. Deen serving as Co-Chair. This motion will be submitted to the BOD on 3/14/05. There were 5 new members of the MTAC.
- Measurement uncertainty guidance regarding previously defined categories was discussed. It was voted and approved to include the proposed addition to the annex developed this year. K. Stoub requested that the MTAC provide the CC with the annex so that it can be voted upon. The CC was polled to determine if the annex should be reviewed in full, with the additions being considered later. L. Gradin (Chair of the EMAC) felt that the EMAC was limited with their annex because their original paper was 50 pages. The annex now covers only the tables that were within the paper and none of the original data. It is believed that the benefit of the tables is weakened, due to the absent data. D. Flinchbaugh will review the annex for the MTAC before it is submitted to the CC for review and voting.

**ACTION: Staff representatives to the technical advisory committees to submit their measurement uncertainty annexes to the CC for review and approval (by April 30, 2005).**

- S. Lerman was asked to propose language for T9d to allow a stated tolerance for an in-house calibration in lieu of an outside calibration, since ISO/IEC 17025 allows for reference to a metrological specification. Disagreement was voiced due to concern that laboratories could potentially establish such high tolerances for their equipment that it would always read “in tolerance”.

P. Unger discussed the requirement regarding T1 that all reference materials shall be calibrated. The motion was made to have staff review T1 to better serve our laboratories in what is needed.

**ACTION: TBarnett to provide to the CC a list of all documents that are to be approved through them (by April 30, 2005).**

**ACTION: TMcInturff and RRobinson to review language in T1 to clarify how/if this applies to reference materials, as opposed to physical reference standards (by April 30, 2005).**

c. Measurement Advisory Committee (MAC) – Presented by A. Webb, Chair of the MAC. Issues brought forward from the MAC included:

- A discussion took place regarding laboratories expressing a range. The MAC has requested a revision of the calibration program requirements to address the issue. A task group has been identified and will have the revision completed by June 30, 2005. The proposed revision will then be sent to the CC for voting and approval.
- Issues arose related to T9d of the *A2LA Traceability Policy*. While this section states that in-house laboratories must have a procedure, there is no required objective evidence (i.e., records). It was pointed out that this is a requirement of T1 and, indirectly, through various clauses within ISO/IEC 17025 (4.12.2.1 and 5.4.6.1).

**ACTION: TMcInturff and RRobinson to asterisk T9d in the assessor checklist so that labs and assessors are clear on the requirement for there to be records/objective evidence for laboratories conducting in-house calibrations (by April 30, 2005).**

- A revision of the MAC bylaws was discussed to include language on how members may be replaced. It was requested that the MAC bylaws contain the same relevant language as the A2LA bylaws.
- The MAC requested clarification as to whether the Vice Chair must be approved by the Board of Directors. P. Unger indicated that Vice Chair positions are not Board approved. The MAC Chair was asked to address this specifically in the MAC bylaws update.
- The MAC was tasked with reviewing and revising the “mandatory guidance” document for calibration Scopes containing hardness. It was also recommended that the MAC also use of the term “mandatory guidance”.

**ACTION: DLeaman to ensure that the term “mandatory guidance” used for the hardness scope format document be revised to make clear whether this document is guidance or a requirement (by May 31, 2005).**

d. Electro-Mechanical Advisory Committee (EMAC) - Presented by L. Gradin, Chair of the EMAC. Issues brought forward by the EMAC included:

- Work is in progress to update and define a number of words.

**ACTION: TMcInturff and RRobinson to design a funnel for processing, compiling and reviewing for consistency the numerous definitions that the technical advisory committees will be submitting to A2LA (by May 31, 2005).**

- Staff was asked to post the EMAC meeting minutes to the website. It was pointed out that these minutes are placed on the website for attendees to access. However, this site is not password protected and is discoverable through a web search. It was also pointed out that a summary of all conclave meetings is contained in the April newsletter each year.
- A motion was made to revise the EMAC bylaws to allow for recording (at the EMAC member's request) the identity of those who vote against or abstain from voting for a particular motion. This motion was approved.
- An EMAC guidance document (7 pages) has been developed for the laboratories outlining proficiency testing opportunities. Currently, additional definitions are being developed and included in the document. It was asked whether this document would be guidance or mandatory and it was clarified that it would be for guidance purposes only.

**ACTION: Staff representative to the EMAC is to ensure that the 7-page guidance document on proficiency testing participation is reviewed and approved by the CC before it is distributed (by May 31, 2005).**

- Scope format for EMAC labs is being reviewed with the intent of developing a more detailed approach to presenting Scopes. The measurement uncertainty annex from the EMAC was reviewed and determined still to be appropriate, though further definitions are being developed.
- e. Construction Materials Advisory Committee (CMAC) – Presented by Neil Zuern, Chair of the CMAC. Issues brought forward from the CMAC included:
- Construction materials testing (CMT) laboratories use ASTM methods for the most part and the CMAC is concerned with the rapid rate at which these methods are being updated. Assessors currently ensure that labs are using the most current versions.
  - Discussion took place related to a potential mutual recognition agreement between A2LA, AASHTO, and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). AASHTO and ACE require that artifacts be brought into CMT laboratories to verify equipment. The CMAC has recommended that A2LA incorporate this aspect into its assessments by contracting accredited calibration laboratories to bring these artifacts into the CMT labs. This would not require a change to the CMT program requirements but will most likely require an additional checklist and cost to the laboratory. However, if AASHTO and ACE would recognize A2LA in this capacity, it would go a long way toward eliminating duplicate accreditations. The plan for implementing this program is to be presented at the Board of Directors meeting on 3/14/05.

The question was raised whether or not A2LA has obtained written agreement from ACE and/or AASHTO that they will accept this if A2LA moves forward with implementing this aspect of the program. It was confirmed that nothing in writing exists at this time. It was suggested that this written agreement be obtained before any new A2LA program is advertised to laboratories.

The question was raised whether or not there were any laboratories that were willing to try this new program. It was confirmed that there were three laboratories willing to go forward with this plan.

3. CC Members Report

No comments were expressed in this area.

4. Staff Report

a. Responsiveness and Extent of Participation for Technical Documents

T. Barnett discussed a calibration document that was approved by members of the CC who were not experts in the field. Only three individuals responded to the pre-ballot and only two of the three responded with a formal vote. P. Unger indicated that all CC members should review everything to ensure that they are up-to-date with respect to activities in each area.

It was suggested that all of the committee chairs be required to read and review all proposed new and revised technical documents.

**ACTION: T. Barnett to review the internal SOP for CC balloting to ensure it clearly defines minimum extent of review for all new and revised technical documents.**

b. Resolving Negative Votes

T. Barnett made a revision to section 2.4.2 of SOP 029 so that the staff could not make the final decision on all negative votes.

5. New Business

It was noticed that the website does not always contain only current versions of documents. P. Unger stated that all problems of this nature should go to T. Barnett or D. Valentine.

A question was raised regarding A2LA's process for handling labs that are misusing the A2LA Accredited symbol. T. Barnett outlined the internal process.

An update was requested regarding the ongoing debate over definitions of "method" and "procedure". ILAC had agreed that the terms were functionally equivalent. Concern was

again expressed that definitions such as these are not funneled through the CC before they are implemented. Rather, decisions are agreed upon by staff.

K. Stoub asked that staff develop detailed procedures for the development, approval, and dissemination of definitions, policies and interpretations. It was agreed that these issues should be funneled through the CC for approval. Staff pointed out that, at times, immediate interpretations must be made in order to be able to move forward with a laboratory's accreditation; however, these interpretations should still be passed to the CC for ultimate approval.

**ACTION: Staff to develop detailed procedures for the development, approval, and dissemination of definitions, policies, and interpretations, including appropriate review and approval by the CC (by April 30, 2005).**

The A2LA Criteria Council Meeting was adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

*Minutes prepared by Ada R. Hensley, Senior Laboratory Services Officer.*