ARAC Quality Manual

AUTHORIZATION

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CLASSIFICATION

This document is classified as an ARAC Administrative Document.

AVAILABILITY

A Copy of this document in English is available at the ARAC Secretariat and on ARAC website.

This document is available in English language

Content

ARAC Quality Manual

The current document, ARAC AD 003 "ARAC Quality Manual", provides the current operational basis of the Arab Accreditation Cooperation (ARAC) and describes the management system requirements to guarantee the fulfillment of its objectives.

1. What is ARAC?

The Arab Accreditation Cooperation (ARAC) was launched in 2011, in Cairo, Egypt as an association of accreditation bodies and other organizations interested in conformity assessment in the Arab Region.

ARAC is a nonprofit organization operating on the basis of cooperation among its members and stakeholders. ARAC's resources come from membership fees and voluntary donations by its members and contributions of projects by relevant organizations. ARAC's basic documents are the Memorandum of Understanding and the Bylaws.

ARAC MLA is recognized by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and International Accreditation Forum (IAF),

ARAC has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Regional Cooperation Organizations in Accreditation and is working in close cooperation with other related organizations.

2. Recognition by the League of Arab States [LAS]

Following the 95th Ministerial Economic and Social Council meeting of the League of Arab States [LAS], held on 19th February 2015 in LAS headquarters, in Cairo, Egypt, the Ministerial Economic and Social Council has recognized ARAC as one of the main pillars of the Pan Arab quality infrastructure in supporting intra-regional trade and the Arab Customs Union requirements.

3. Bylaws

Through its Bylaws, ARAC makes known the formal structures and rules aimed at reaching the objectives of the MOU, as stated in the document ARAC AD 002 "ARAC Bylaws", currently in force.

4. Memorandum of Understanding

Through the Memorandum of Understanding, ARAC communicates the basic elements of its origin, composition and functions, as stated in the document ARAC AD 001 "Memorandum of Understanding", currently in force.

5. Vision

The leading accreditation group facilitating regional and global trade and supporting sustainable development.

6. ARAC mission

According to ARAC Bylaw, ARAC's mission is to coordinate and develop the accreditation infrastructure among accreditation bodies in the Arab region with the aim to be internationally recognized. This is through the ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA). ARAC ensures confidence in accredited conformity assessment results through harmonized operation of accreditation activities in support increasing economic efficiency in the Arab region and facilitating international trade.

7. Quality Policy

ARAC is committed to:
- Supporting trade facilitation in the Arab region through the establishment of an effective and accepted Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MLA) between the accreditation bodies in the region;

- Seeking to have all the countries' accreditation Bodies in the Arab Region eventually get to be members in ARAC's Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangements (MLAs);

- Ensuring that accredited conformity assessment bodies by the ARAC member accreditation bodies are competent according to the working international standards in their fields;

- Cooperating with the wider community of international accreditation through Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangements (MRAs/MLAs) with the regional and international organizations of accreditation bodies;

- Meeting and exceeding the expectations of its member accreditation bodies, its regional conformity assessment bodies, stakeholders, and other interested parties;

8. Goals

The ARAC goals are:
- To coordinate between all the accreditation activities in the regional Arab countries and help them develop and improve accreditation systems.

- To promote ARAC within the regional Arab countries and to get them to be members in it in order to get the benefits of the coordination and cooperation with the member accreditation bodies.

- To assist the current and potential ARAC members, and provide advice on matters related to accreditation of certification bodies, inspection bodies, testing and calibration laboratories;

- To facilitate collaboration, cooperation and mutual assistance among members by means of training activities, meetings of experts and sharing of information and experiences;

- To seek financial and other types of support for ARAC members from regional and international organizations to develop training and assessment programs in the areas of accreditation and conformity assessment.

- To harmonize the criteria for the operation of member accreditation bodies, based on ISO/IEC international standard and guides and IAF and ILAC documents;

- To develop, maintain, improve and expand the scopes of the ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangements;

- To maintain international recognition as a Regional Cooperation by IAF and ILAC;

- To increase the acceptance of certificates and reports issued by accredited conformity assessment bodies through established Multilateral Recognition Arrangements;

- To facilitate the Exchange of information between accreditation body members of ARAC and members of IAF and ILAC;

- To promote cooperation in training of peer evaluators and other personnel of accreditation bodies;

- To encourage and facilitate the adoption and implementation of standards, guidelines and application of documents that have been developed by relevant international bodies, such as IAF and ILAC;

- To encourage and support the development of accreditation bodies in the Arab Region;

- To work with other regional bodies such as Arab Industrial Development Standardization and Mining Organization (AIDSMO), the Arab Metrology System (ARAMET&ARAMEL), Inter American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC), the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC), the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA), the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), as well as technical bodies from different sub regional blocs;

- To build up and to maintain mutual confidence in the technical competence among Full Members and to work towards further development of the ARAC multilateral recognition arrangement (MLA),

9. Strategic Plan

ARAC developed its strategy for the period 2023-2025 where four pillars with their strategic goals have been identified as necessary to realize the ARAC vision to 2025.

10. Organizational Structure

The Organizational Structure of ARAC currently includes a General Assembly, an Executive Committee, a President, an Executive Secretary, Technical Committee, Communication and Marketing Committee, MLA Group and an MLA committee. There are also working groups like the capacity building working group. This is described in the following figure:

Organizational Structure
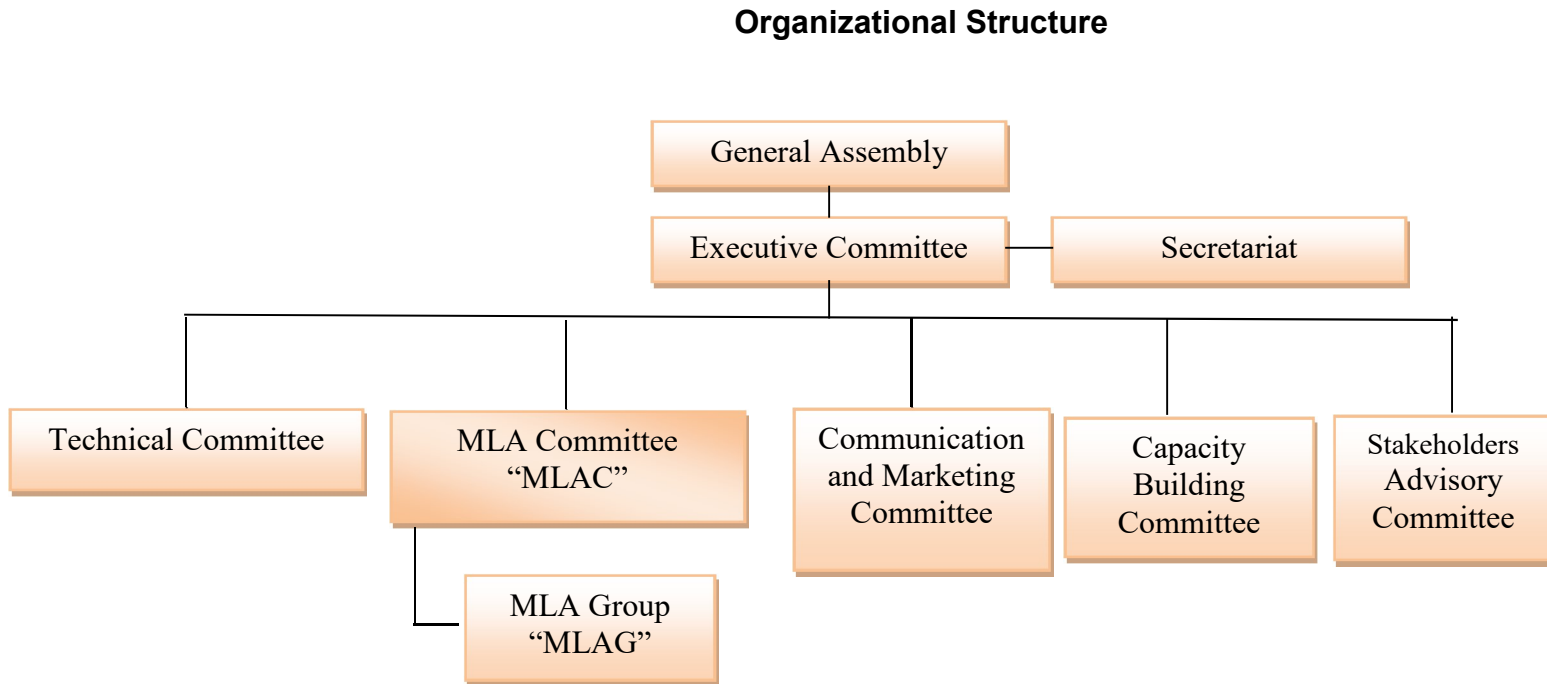
11. Terms of Reference

As an organization based on the continuous effort of organizations and persons, ARAC coordinates its activity through its current strategy (ARAC AD 004 , which rules and organizes every effort using terms of reference defined for the various working, decision-making and governing groups. The terms of reference established by ARAC are:

- Executive Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 020, currently in force).

- Technical Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 022, currently in force).

- Communication and Marketing Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 028, currently in force).

- MLA Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 021).

- MLA Group terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 023).

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- Capacity Building Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 006).

- Stakeholders Advisory Committee terms of reference (see document ARAC AD 005).

12. ARAC Members' Assembly

ARAC members gather annually to receive an update of all relevant events and actions undertaken in the previous year, hold discussions and agree on the organization's future work. The coordination and planning of this assembly is described in the current document ARAC AD 002 "ARAC Bylaws".

13. Policies and Procedures Documents

All associated ARAC policies and procedures documents are published in the ARAC Documents Master List which is on the ARAC Website www.arab-accreditation.org

14. Management Review

The management review is essential to ensure the proper operation and development of the strategic plan, the achievement of ARAC goals and the proper operation and improvement of ARAC Management System. The management review is carried out by ARAC Executive Committee according to the current document ARAC PR 010 "Procedure for Management Review".

15. Internal Audit

ARAC performs systematic internal audits of its management system, processes and results at least once per year. Internal audit is performed according to the current document ARAC PR 011 "Procedure for Internal Audits", which establishes requirements to present, perform and check the results of corrective actions resulting from internal audits. This way ARAC verifies their operation, implementation and effectiveness, which allows for optimization and improvement of ARAC's operation.

16. Document control

In the document ARAC PR 001 "Procedure for ARAC documents control", currently in force, ARAC has established a procedure for the effective control of its management system documents in order to ensure its proper drafting, identification, classification, revision, voting, approval, validity and distribution and their publication in other languages.

Likewise, a procedure is in place for the adoption by ARAC of international documents: ARAC PR 007, "Procedure for the adoption by ARAC of international documents", currently in force.

17. Record control

ARAC demonstrates conformity with its management system requirements and commitments through documents issued as evidence of its activity, which are ARAC

records. Records are controlled as described in the document ARAC PR 020 "ARAC Records Management Procedure", currently in force.

18. Complaints and appeals

All complaints and appeals filed to ARAC are handled according to the document ARAC PR 005 "Procedure for handling complaints and appeals", which ensures that the parties involved state their views, and a resolution is issued in accordance with the relevant ARAC rules and requirements (see document ARAC PR 006 "Procedure to write ARAC Resolutions", currently in force).

19. Corrective and preventive actions

The steps to take corrective and preventive actions resulting from internal audits, management reviews, complaints and appeals are described in the current procedures established by ARAC to this effect and established in this Quality Manual.

If any activities lead to corrective and preventive actions resulting from sources other than the above, the ARAC Secretary will record them and submit them to the ARAC President to decide who will be appointed to monitor said actions until their closure.

20. Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA)

The documents regarding the "Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA)" are a major effort to develop and meet ARAC goals. In this regard, the document ARAC MD 001 "ARAC Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangement", describes the elements of a Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangement, in order to ensure its correct and appropriate implementation.

This MLA is based on results from evaluations carried out according to procedure MD 002 "Policies and procedures for a Multilateral Recognition Arrangement among Accreditation Bodies".

ARAC makes the application documents available to all its interested parties (see document ARAC FM 001 "ARAC MLA Application Form").

21. Notice of changes

Signatories to the ARAC MLA shall notify the ARAC Secretary and the Chair of the MLA Group of any significant changes in the status and/or operational practices of its system, such as a change of name or legal status; details of new agreements; revision, suspension or termination of any agreement; major changes in its key staff and/or organizational structure; major operational changes, especially in the mechanisms to ensure the proper functioning of the organization; details about the use of subcontracted evaluations; or any change to be reviewed which may have an impact on the accreditation bodies signatories of the ARAC MLA in order to take relevant action.

22. Selection, training, qualification and monitoring the performance of peer evaluators

In order to include a new member into the MLA, ARAC makes sure of counting on a

staff with the adequate qualification, experience and competence to carry out the Peer evaluation process. The application and requirements to be an ARAC peer evaluator (Document ARAC FM 006 "ARAC Peer evaluator curriculum vitae form") make it possible to rely on such staff and establish proper qualification and training processes. This process to select, train, qualify and monitor peer evaluators is established in the following documents: ARAC MD 002 "Policies and procedures for a Multi-lateral Recognition Arrangement among Accreditation Bodies" and ARAC PR 004 "Procedure for selection, training, qualification and monitoring the performance of ARAC peer evaluators", currently in force.

23. ARAC confidentiality and impartiality

Through its declaration of confidentiality and impartiality, ARAC communicates and establishes the rules and commitments of its peer evaluators and observers, MLAC members, MLAG, MLA Secretariat, and observers of an ARAC MLAC and MLAG meeting to protect the confidential nature of the information about the evaluation process and be impartial at all times. This declaration is formally stated and described in the document ARAC FM 011 "ARAC Declaration of confidentiality and impartiality", currently in force. In this connection, ARAC guarantees the fulfillment of the established regulations through the document ARAC PR 004 "Procedure for the monitoring of peer evaluators", currently in force.

24. Use of the ARAC logo

ARAC is establishing the regulations for the correct use of the ARAC logo (see document ARAC PR 009).

25. Finance

ARAC shall strive to be a self-funding cooperation. To this end, its financial viability is a shared responsibility amongst Members.
The direct income to cover ARAC's operational costs will come from:
- Annual Membership fees;
- Projects;
- Development Partner Contributions;
- and Training.

The income generated by ARAC is required to fund representation at international fora, training and utilization of evaluators, Secretariat activities and creation and maintenance of appropriate documentation.

As far as possible, the costs of ARAC conferences and meetings of the GA will be covered by the registration fees payable by all participants.

Each year the Treasurer, on behalf of the Executive Committee will propose to the GA a draft budget for the coming calendar year. All meeting expenses are to be borne by participants.

ARAC's fees for a particular calendar year will be set according to a formula agreed by the GA, the aggregate of which will be sufficient to meet agreed budget objectives.

The ARAC EC will ensure that an appropriate financial audit is conducted annually in a

manner to satisfy the requirements of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The Secretariat and Treasurer are responsible for ensuring that all fees are charged according to the documented fee structure.

Failure to pay fees by the stipulated date may result in withdrawal of Membership, according to the ARAC membership fees procedure ARAC PR 020.

An annual financial report is provided to the GA by the Treasurer at each meeting of the GA.

26.1   Financial audits

The Financial Audit Committee shall review the annual financial audits and report its results to the General Assembly.

The Financial Audit Committee shall consist of at least two people from the ARAC membership, who are free from any conflict of interest in relation to the financial management of ARAC for the years being audited, whose appointment is confirmed by the General Assembly.

One person shall be nominated and subsequently confirmed by the General Assembly as the Financial Audit Committee Chair. The term of service for the members of the Financial Audit Committee, shall be for a maximum of three (3) consecutive, two (2) year terms, ie a maximum of six (6) years.

The Financial Audit Committee shall review the annual financial audits to identify appropriate management of the ARAC finances, especially in relation to the budget approved by the ARAC General Assembly, and report its findings to the ARAC Executive Committee and the ARAC General Assembly each year.

The Chair (or the Chair's designated representative) of the Financial Audit Committee shall liaise with the ARAC Secretary and ARAC Treasurer to obtain the financial records, minutes of meetings, agenda papers, and any other supporting information that is deemed necessary to conduct a thorough review of the ARAC accounts.

The report from the Financial Audit Committee must be provided to the Executive Committee one month prior to the ARAC General Assembly each year. The report may contain recommendations as the Financial Audit Committee sees fit.

The report from the Financial Audit Committee will be distributed to the ARAC members prior to the General Assembly.

The Chair (or the Chair's designated representative) of the Financial Audit Committee shall present the Committee's report to the General Assembly.

26. ARAC Website

You can find ARAC at www.arab-accreditation.org, which includes an open public section and a members-only section. The latter is open to all ARAC members without

restriction, as well as to other organizations and ARAC stakeholders.

The member appointed by each organization is given a personal user name and password to enter the website. Every user is responsible for the use and control of the password and the confidential nature of the information they access.

User names and passwords are assigned to representatives of other organizations and stakeholders to access specific topics for a limited amount of time. These representatives are responsible for the use and control of their passwords and the confidential nature of the information they access.

The ARAC website is managed by the ARAC Secretariat and the Communication and Marketing Committee. The ARAC Secretariat is responsible for assigning user names and passwords to enter the website. The contents and texts, published in the website under the supervision of the ARAC Secretariat and the Communication and Marketing Committee, are validated beforehand, as appropriate, by the General Assembly, a Committee, or a Working Group.

Any necessary or proposed change in the information and structure of the website must be previously authorized, as appropriate, by the General Assembly, a Committee, or a Working Group and coordinated by the ARAC Secretariat and the Communication and Marketing Committee. Any ARAC member, committee or stakeholder may request a change in the content of the website.

ARAC has a contract with the website providers in accordance with the required safety, privacy and confidentiality policies and rules established by ARAC that guarantees its proper and continuous operation.

ARAC developed and implemented IT solutions that cover the following processes:
- Document control process,
- Peer evaluation process,
- Peer Evaluators qualification process,
- ARAC membership process,
- E-learning and online training platform,
- Endorsement of the ARAC GA resolutions,
- Election of the ARAC Committees Chairs.