MLA GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

CLASSIFICATION
This document is classified as an ARAC Administrative Document.

AUTHORIZATION

Issue Nº:	03
Prepared by:	MLA Group
Date:	12/03/2025
Revision Nº:	01
Approved by:	ARAC GA
Issue Date:	23/09/2025
Application Date:	Immediate
Document number:	ARAC AD 023

Inquiries:	ARAC Secretariat
e-mail:	secretariat@arabarac.org

AVAILABILITY
Copies of this document in English are available at the ARAC Secretariat and on the ARAC website.

COPYRIGHT
ARAC holds the copyright of this document and it may not be copied for resale.

Original: English

MLA GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.   **Objective**

   a) The objective of the MLA Group (MLAG) is to decide on, manage and review the evaluation of the membership in the ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA).

   b) This document specifies the functions, composition, quorum and responsibilities of the MLA Group.

2.   **Functions of the MLA Group (MLAG)**

   a)   Plan and manage the implementation and maintenance of the ARAC MLA, based on peer evaluation demonstrating equal reliability and/or equivalence of the operations of the accreditation systems of ARAC members against the relevant ISO/IEC Standard and any IAF/ILAC/ARAC Mandatory/Guidance documents, in accordance with IAF/ILAC/ARAC Policies and Procedures;

   b)   To make decisions on the acceptance of applications to the ARAC MLA.

   c)   To make decisions on the need for a pre-peer evaluation visit,

   d)   To make decisions regarding the status of membership to the ARAC MLA, including granting, maintaining, suspension and withdrawal from the MLA,

   e)   To propose rules regarding the membership of ARAC, including the classification of membership and its conditions that serve ARAC MLA,

   f)   To monitor the performance of peer evaluators,

   g)   To review evaluation report including:
      - Findings to confirm that they are correctly classified.
      - That the report contains the necessary information to have full confidence that the Accreditation Body (AB) complies with MLA requirements.
      - Review the validity of the evaluation team recommendation.

   h)   To review changes notified by signatories that affect the MLA and to decide on subsequent actions,

   i)   To manage the performance evaluation process of the peer evaluators

   j)   To manage the process for the extension of the ARAC MLA scope,

k) To oversee implementation of ARAC, ILAC and IAF resolutions relevant to the MLA,

l) To liaise with management committees of other international and regional MLAs (e.g., ILAC, IAF, AFRAC, IAAC, APAC, EA),

m) To establish the criteria to qualify peer evaluators and lead peer evaluators,

n) Keep an updated registry of peer evaluators, for participation in ARAC MLA peer evaluation process,

o)

p) Analyse the PEWG demand for peer evaluator training and coordinate peer evaluator training/workshops.

2.1. Composition of the ARAC MLA Group

a) The Chair and the Vice Chair of the MLAC are the Chair and Vice Chair of the MLAG.

b) The MLAG shall have a Secretary who is the MLAC Secretary.

c) The MLAG shall comprise two representatives from each ARAC MLA signatory: one Delegate and one Alternate.

d) The delegates and their alternates (who is to vote instead of the delegate when he/she is involved in the evaluation) shall be nominated by their entities to the Chair of the MLAG.

e) Each signatory has a voice and vote.

f) A single vote is considered for each signatory, not for each country.

g) The quorum of the MLA Group shall be achieved in a meeting when at least 80% of the ARAC MLA signatories are present in person or by proxy, and for electronic ballots when 80% of the MLA signatories issue the vote.

h) Decisions of the MLA Group will be made preferably by consensus. If consensus is not achieved decisions shall be made by an affirmative vote of two thirds of votes (abstentions will not be considered). Decision may be made either in meetings or by e-mail ballot.

i) Invitations to other organizations or ARAC members to participate as observers can be made by the Chair of the MLA Group.

j) The evaluation team leader and evaluation team members may be invited to participate as observers in MLAG meetings where the report of a peer evaluation they have performed is discussed. During the meetings they may observe the MLA Group's discussion concerning their evaluation, respond to MLA Group's questions, provide clarifications and any information that may help the MLAG in the decision-making process.

k) If a member of the MLAG is from the AB which is subject to the MLAG decision, then he/she will note participate in the decision-making process. If a member of

MLAG has participated in a peer evaluation, he/she shall abstain from voting in the relevant decision and his/her alternate may issue the vote.

2.2. Selection Criteria of the ARAC MLA Group members

The ARAC MLA Group delegates and their alternates shall fulfill the following criteria:

a) Have an understanding of what should be in a report from a generic and specific perspective.

b) Have collective expertise at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the IAF MLA and the ILAC Arrangement.

c) Understand; the planning and conduct of the evaluation, its breadth and depth, the findings and their classification, and the adequacy of the conclusions, and recommendations.

d) Experienced as an AB assessor, and exposure to the A series documents, IAF MLA P&P, ILAC P-Series as well as practical experience in the peer evaluation process.

e) In addition to the above criteria, the MLAG Chair shall be qualified as ARAC Peer Evaluator TL.

f) At least one of the ARAC MLA Group members shall be qualified as a peer evaluator.

To ensure consistent application and verification of competence criteria, the ARAC Secretariat shall use ARAC FM 038 'MLAG Member Competence Verification Checklist' to document and confirm that each nominated or renewed MLAG member meets the requirements set out in this clause.

3.   Responsibilities

3.1. The Chair's responsibilities are:

a)   Carry out these Terms of Reference

b)   Chair meetings of the MLA Group;

c)   Appoint team leader and team members for peer evaluations; The Chair of the MLAG may propose the Team Leader to the MLAG members for their approval before appointing the team for peer evaluations

d)   Submit to the MLA Group peer evaluation reports and all other matters that requires their decision;

e)   Report to the General Assembly and Executive Committee about the work that is being carried out in the MLAG;

f) Submit to the General Assembly for ratification, all the resolutions adopted by the MLA Group;

g) Inform the ARAC General Assembly of new signatories and their scopes of recognition and other decisions of MLAG including those related to maintaining, suspension or withdrawal from the MLA; and

h) Maintain the Vice-Chair informed on all of the current and planned activities.

3.2. The Vice-Chair's responsibilities are:

a) Assist the Chair in the fulfillment of his/her duties;

b) Replace the Chair in his/her absence or impediment; and

c) Maintain permanent contact with the Chair in order to be aware of the current and planned activities, and assist the Chair in carrying them out.

3.3. The MLA Group Secretary's responsibilities are:

a) Assist the Chair in the fulfillment of his/her duties; and

b) Maintain the Vice-Chair informed on all of the current and planned activities.

c) Draft meeting resolutions and distribute them to MLA Group members, respectively

d) Distribute to MLA Group members the working papers for committee meetings.

e) Distribute to MLA Group members the evaluation reports which require MLAG decisions as well as other MLAG working papers

f) Maintain and update peer evaluator registry and maintain peer evaluation records.

g) Maintain and publish the list of MLA Signatories;

h) Submit an annual ARAC MLA report for the IAF MLA MC, the ILAC AMC and IAF&ILAC JMC.

3.4. The representatives of the MLAG member shall

a) Attend the MLAG meetings and participate in the MLAG discussions

b) Review evaluation report findings to confirm that they are correctly classified and that the report contains the necessary information to have full confidence that the AB complies with MLA requirements

c) Review and participate in decisions on peer evaluation reports, applications for recognitions, recommendations for preliminary visits, and other decisions related to signatory status.

4. Meetings

4.1. The MLAG shall meet when considered necessary by the Chair, by the ARAC Executive Committee, or by at least two third of its members.

4.2. The MLAG shall meet at least once a year.

4.3. Draft agendas shall be distributed at least two weeks before each meeting.

4.4. Draft MLAG minutes and resolutions shall be distributed within two months of the meeting.

4.5. MLA Group meeting documents shall be distributed at least two weeks prior to each meeting.

4.6. Peer Evaluation reports which require MLAG decisions shall be distributed to MLAG members at least 15 days before the meetings.

4.7. All MLAG documents are confidential. Members shall sign the ARAC Declaration of Confidentiality and Commitment (ARAC FM 035) once upon joining the MLAG, with this declaration remaining valid for their entire membership period. Additionally, prior to any ARAC MLA decision, MLAG members are required to sign the ARAC Declaration of Conflict of Interest (FM 011) before receiving the Accreditation Body's Peer Evaluation report. Observers in the meetings of the MLAG shall sign the ARAC FM 035 at the beginning of each meeting.