

**UNITED KINGDOM ACCREDITATION SERVICE
POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Confirmed minutes of 1st meeting
Held on Wednesday 6th July 2011 at the Lansdowne Club**

Present

Dr Martin Jones (Chairman)	CBI
Susan Brand	ECCA
Chris Elliott	MoD
Dr Ray Lambert (invited guest)	BIS
Dr Jeff Llewellyn	BMTA
Daniel Mansfield	BSI
John Mortimer	BIS
Trevor Nash	ABCB
Prof Adrian Newland	AMRC
Mike Pearson	FSB
Ian Severn (deputising for Ron Gainsford)	NPL
Prof Ian Sharp	HPA
Paul Stennett	UKAS
Graham Talbot	UKAS
Lorraine Turner	UKAS
Malcolm Hynd (Secretary)	UKAS

Apologies

Ron Gainsford (deputy: Ian Severn)	TSI
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1. Welcome, apologies

Dr Jones welcomed members to the first meeting of the UKAS Policy Advisory Council. He noted that nominations had been received from all constituencies except the health sector direct customers. Mr Stennett reported that discussions were continuing to ensure that UKAS' stakeholders in the health sector had an appropriate committee structure through which it could feed into PAC. Dr Jones noted that the health sector did have representation on the PAC through Prof Newland, Prof Sharp and Ms Brand.

2. PAC Working methods

Dr Jones suggested that the creation of the PAC provided an opportunity to focus more on policy and strategic issues than before and this was welcomed by members.

Dr Llewellyn suggested that reports provided to PAC could be shortened and summarised. Other members considered the full reports to be of interest and noted that the international reports were needed for submission to BIS. Dr Jones noted that PAC played an important role in advising BIS on value for money and priorities. Following discussion it was agreed that reports should continue to be provided in full but that they would be marked 'For information only'. Any important policy issues would be highlighted separately by UKAS.

Dr Jones asked whether members had been able successfully to consult with other members of their constituency within PAF. Mr Mortimer explained that the Government group had established an online forum to aid communication. Dr Llewellyn confirmed that direct customer representatives had received email comments from other members of the group. Prof Newland confirmed that the end user group had also received comments from other parties.

Mr Stennett explained the he was considering the need for a separate group for healthcare stakeholders and this group could feed into PAC. This solution recognised the newness of most medical stakeholders to UKAS affairs. Ms Brand suggested that health and social care needed to be treated differently given that social care was highly fragmented and not professionally regulated.

Prof Newland explained that the move of CPA to UKAS was founded on a desire to ensure that the accreditation process was independent. Other areas within the health sector were now considering similar moves. However, this did lead to a certain loss of control for the stakeholders, hence the need for specific sub-groups.

Mr Severn suggested that the purpose of the PAC was to consider the wider considerations around these issues. For example, he considered that traceable measurement was not well established in the health sector and there could be some transfer of expertise.

Prof Sharp thought the discussion showed the need for PAC to remain as a top level policy group. Dr Jones viewed cross fertilisation as an important role for the PAC. It was agreed that Mr Stennett should proceed as proposed.

Action: Mr Stennett

3. Minutes of 43rd meeting of the UKAS Policy Advisory Council

The minutes were agreed as drafted with the minor changes as shown in PAC/24/10 Rev1.

4. Matters arising (not covered elsewhere)

4.1 Work to assess the impact of non-accredited certification (Item 3.2)

Mr Mortimer acknowledged that non-accredited certification was a recurring question, partly because the size of the market for it had never been quantified. He suggested that the issue did not seem to be as apparent as it once was, based on the number of complaints received, but had agreed to include it in the forthcoming BIS study on the economic benefits of accreditation. He requested help from stakeholders in providing information and case studies etc but reminded the group that it was not against the law to offer non-accredited certification. He considered that the main issue was to educate the market on the benefits of accreditation eg through the Accreditation Awareness Campaign.

Mr Talbot reported that some EU countries had laws on accreditation. Mr Mansfield agreed that it was a global problem. ISO remained neutral on certification and accreditation but was concerned that non-accredited certification was damaging the ISO name.

Mr Pearson reported that he was trying to have an advert for non-accredited certification withdrawn from the FSB magazine. However, he thought FSB members saw accredited certification as expensive. Mr Hynd mentioned a new brochure prepared by UKAS to promote the benefits of accredited certification and that UKAS would welcome the opportunity to work with Mr Pearson to provide this material to FSB members.

Action Mr Hynd

Mr Elliott suggested that it was up to indirect customers to insist on accredited certification. He said that the MoD policy is clear: it only accepted accredited certification.

Mr Nash reported that there were also issues with non-recognised accreditation which, he suggested was against Regulation 765/2008. Mr Mortimer confirmed that BIS had no powers to enforce against non-recognised accreditation bodies but suggested that Mr Nash should write to trigger new formal enquiries.

Action Mr Nash

Mr Talbot noted that there was some criticism internationally of UK for allowing non-recognised accreditation.

5. Review of UKAS Policy Advisory Forum

5.1 Report and review of first meeting

There were no comments on the report which was agreed as drafted (PAF/06/11).

There was general agreement that the meeting had gone well and satisfaction with the administrative arrangements and venue etc. Mr Mortimer requested that future agendas should be sufficiently broad to be of interest to all members.

5.2 PAF membership

The proposal for the addition of the TUC to PAF membership was agreed.

The other minor changes proposed in PAC/03/11 were agreed.

5.3 Arrangements for PAF meeting 2012

Mr Hynd proposed that the 2012 PAF meeting should be arranged for early March, once more at the BIS Conference Centre. He proposed a half day meeting to cover report back from PAC, UKAS annual review and focus group strategy discussions. Mr Stennett proposed that the strategy discussion should be around the development of the UKAS Business Plan for 2013-2016. These outline proposals were agreed.

6. PAC Members issues

Dr Jones reported that no issues had been raised for discussion by members. He suggested that this was a valuable opportunity for members to raise high level policy issues for discussion and invited members to put items forward for future meetings.

7. UKAS Issues

7.1 Responding to the increasing demands for accreditation as an alternative to regulation – follow up to PAF discussion

7.1.1 Economic benefits of accreditation

Dr Ray Lambert, BIS economist, explained that he was leading a study to quantify the economic benefits of the UK's innovation infrastructure. Given that there were good economic indicators for other parts of the infrastructure, he was hoping to focus a large part of his work on conformity assessment and accreditation. He was able to pick up some information from other studies, eg accreditation was an integral part of delivering the benefits of standards and supporting measurement, but it was difficult to quantify. He wanted to focus on this and particularly to include information on non-accredited certification. UKAS was planning to provide access to data, subject to commercial confidentiality, as was the TSO database but he was looking for help and information, anecdotal evidence and case studies. He was aiming to produce a draft report in the autumn with a final report by the end of the year.

Ms Brand stressed the need for accreditation to provide regulatory relief eg by reducing external inspections. This was not as widespread as it could be eg certified care homes were still having to pay for CQC registration and were receiving the same payment whether certified or not. Prof Sharp agreed that the requirement for accreditation should replace regulatory inspections.

Dr Jones acknowledged that there were costs involved but the basis of the argument for certification was that the benefits should outweigh the costs. Prof Sharp said that the adoption of ISO 9001 should lead to a reduction in product recalls.

Mr Nash recognised that there was a distinction between the benefits from compliance with standards and the benefits to be derived from certification. The initial idea behind third party certification was to reduce audits from customers. He suggested that these ideas may now be so deeply ingrained that they would be hard to quantify.

Prof Newland said that CPA accreditation was not compulsory but without it laboratories' ability to operate in regulatory framework would be restricted. Dr Jones thought that accreditation for laboratories was almost a given.

Mr Stennett said that feedback from ISAS showed a reduction in costs through the reduction of errors. There was also greater potential to reduce the number of assessments and inspections. In some sectors, such as asbestos, accredited organisations could benefit from reduced insurance premiums. He referenced a University of Warwick study on the impact of accreditation in the animal welfare area.

Dr Jones drew attention to the international impact of standards in removing barriers to trade. He said that conformity assessment played an important role if customers required a demonstration of conformity but it was difficult to measure the benefit of this demonstration. Mr Nash said that UKAS' international recognition was important in this respect.

Dr Jones asked for any supporting information to be sent to Dr Lambert along with any offers for interview.

Action: All

[Secretary's note: Dr Lambert can be contacted at BIS, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET or by email at ray.lambert@bis.gsi.gov.uk]

7.1.2 BIS consultation: Transforming Regulatory Enforcement

Mr Hynd explained that the BIS consultation paper was intended to invite views in preparation for a Government White Paper that would set policy in this area. Following a number of discussions between UKAS and the Better Regulation Executive, the consultation paper contained several references to accreditation and a number of other references that hinted at the possibilities for the greater use of accreditation, particularly in the sections of the paper dealing with co-regulation and earned recognition. UKAS would be responding to this consultation to support the ideas in the paper which could lead to the increased use of accreditation. He asked for views on the paper from members and invited members to consider responding to the consultation to add further support to the arguments for the greater recognition of accredited testing and certification in regulatory enforcement.

Dr Llewellyn thought it was important to separate the costs of complying with regulation from the costs of inspection. He saw more benefit from accreditation in helping to reduce the costs of inspection.

Mr Pearson saw real benefit from accreditation in supporting the joining up of different enforcement activities, especially across local authority boundaries.

Ms Brand said that the RDB certification scheme for care homes worked in the way set out in the paper. It had been adopted by the local authority and provided benefits to certified homes in terms of funding and reduction of inspections.

Following discussion about the best way to respond, Mr Hynd agreed to send out a draft UKAS response for members to support or to draw on.

Action: Mr Hynd

8. Reports

8.1 UKAS Board report

Mr Stennett reported that recent Board meetings had focused on:

- The employment of an actuary to advise on the pension scheme;
- First draft financial results, which were generally on budget;
- Darwin, the new ERP system, which was launched on time;
- Report on the first meeting of the Policy Advisory Forum;
- H&S reports.

He noted a proposal to hold the next Board at the Royal College of Pathologists in order to meet the new RCP President.

8.2 International activity

Mr Nash asked about the results of the peer evaluation reassessment. Mr Talbot said that the reassessment would be discussed the October meeting of the EA Multilateral Agreement Council.

8.3 Accreditation report

Mr Mortimer asked for more information on Item 48 on the SAFed self-assessment tool. Mr Talbot explained that this was a discussion about helping small organisations with their preparation for accreditation.

Mr Mortimer asked for feedback on Item 61 on the transition to ISO 17021:2011. Mr Nash thought that the arrangements made were generally acceptable.

Prof Sharp asked about the objective of Item 29 on UKAS/MHRA co-operation. Mr Stennett explained that it indicated a desire to work together on assessments. He thought the work was going well but that there was still more to do.

9. Any other business

Mr Mansfield reported that ISO had agreed to revise ISO 14001 and was also considering overall guidance on the drafting of management systems. Mr Pearson and Mr Nash asked for further details.

Action: Mr Mansfield

Mr Elliott suggested that PAC meetings could start later in the morning to allow for travel at cheaper rates. In discussion, there was a general preference for a 10.15 start to allow time for other activities during the rest of the day.

Mr Stennett proposed that the strategy item at the next PAC meeting should focus on a SWOT/PEST analysis to feed into the UKAS Business Planning process. This was agreed.

10 Next meetings

Mr Stennett requested that the next PAC meeting date should be changed to 24 November to be held at the UKAS office in Feltham. Mr Hynd would circulate a request for confirmation.

Action: Mr Hynd

It was agreed that UKAS would look to arrange the next PAF meeting during the first week of March 2012, once again at the BIS Conference Centre.

Action: Mr Hynd

Members were requested to reserve 5 July 2012 for the 3rd PAC meeting, to be held at the Lansdowne Club.

Action: All