

UNITED KINGDOM ACCREDITATION SERVICE POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Agreed minutes of 5th Meeting
Held on Tuesday 5th March 2013 at the BIS Conference Centre, London**

Present

Dr Martin Jones (Chairman)	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Susan Brand	English Community Care Association (ECCA)
Chris Elliott	Ministry of Defence (MoD)
Ron Gainsford	Trading Standards Institute (TSI)
Dr Jeff Llewellyn	British measurement and Testing Association (BMTA)
Daniel Mansfield	British Standards Institution (BSI)
John Mortimer	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
Trevor Nash	Association of British Certification Bodies (ABCB)
Prof Adrian Newland	Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AMRC)
Mike Pearson	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
Prof Ian Sharp	Health Protection Agency (HPA)
Paul Stennett	UKAS
Lorraine Turner	UKAS
Malcolm Hynd (Secretary)	UKAS

Apologies

None received.

1- Welcome, Apologies

The Chairman welcomed members to the 5th meeting of the UKAS PAC. He advised that this was an interim meeting mainly to prevent the build-up of papers between the November and July meetings.

2- Minutes of 4th Meeting of the UKAS Policy Advisory Council PAC/24/12

Mr Elliott asked for a minor change to the report of Item 4.3. Otherwise the minutes were agreed.

Dr Llewellyn asked about progress on the revision of the customer agreement as discussed under Item 3.2. Ms Turner confirmed that this work was going ahead but more slowly than expected. Rob Bettinson (UKAS Divisional Director Technical) would be taking the lead and would discuss with stakeholders, probably before the next PAC.

Mr Pearson apologised for the delay in actioning his offer to facilitate closer working with FSB (Item 5.1). This was a result of the editorial control procedures being far more complex than anticipated at the time the offer was made. The matter is continuing to be pursued and will hopefully be resolved shortly.

3- Matters arising

3.1 Agreement with ADS Group (Aerospace, Defence and Space trade association) (Item 6.1.1) PAC/25/12

The Chairman confirmed that this paper had been circulated for written comment. A number of comments were received and were satisfactorily resolved.

4- Reports

4.1 UKAS Board Report

Mr Stennett reported on the main items covered:

- Agreement of the strategy plan
- The peer evaluation – discussion of the positive outcome of the evaluation visit but recognition that it still needed to be discussed by the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) Multilateral Agreement Committee, probably in April
- Improvements to financial reporting
- Consideration of the integration of Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) into UKAS' Darwin IT system with the conclusion that this was not possible at the current time
- The business plan for 2013/14
- Possible changes to the fee structure including the possible removal of the annual fee.

Dr Llewellyn and Mr Nash said that BMTA and ABCB would be happy to consider any proposals for changes to the fee structure and would be prepared to help with some market research.

4.2 BIS International contract activity report

PAC/02/13

The Chairman noted that this was the last report prepared by Graham Talbot. In response to a question about how the international programme would be taken forward following Mr Talbot's retirement, Mr Stennett advised that the intention was to spread the international work more evenly across a number of people rather than concentrate on one person. Rob Bettinson had taken over the administration of the programme overall. Jon Murthy (Marketing Manager) had taken over as Chair of the International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC) and International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Communications Committees. Lal Ilan (Development Manager) was in situ as the Inspection Committee Chair. Therefore UKAS had good representation on the ILAC and IAF Executives but needed to consider whether it should seek a presence on the EA Executive. Mr Nash, Dr Llewellyn and Mr Mansfield considered UKAS involvement at this level to be important and expressed support for any proposals to secure representation.

5- PAC Members Issues

Mr Nash asked about the implications of the horsemeat scandal for UKAS. Mr Hynd confirmed that UKAS accreditation supports food testing and certification under the farm assurance schemes and also the British Retail Consortium (BRC) schemes for food processing. No UKAS accredited testing or certification had been questioned so far. Mr Gainsford considered that the BRC schemes were helpful but needed to go deeper to address regulators' needs.

6- UKAS Issues

6.1 Agreements with related bodies

6.1.1 MoD Sector Scheme

PAC/03/13

Mr Elliott explained that MoD had been working on refinements to quality management systems to address particular MoD requirements such as transparency (eg the MoD's right to see reports and to inform the planning process for the audit and to see evidence of the competence of auditors). These requirements were encapsulated in the sector scheme. Mr Nash asked if this scheme would apply across Europe. Mr Elliott explained that European tenderers would be invited to apply for accredited certification under the scheme and the local accreditation body would liaise with UKAS in such cases.

Mr Mansfield noted that the scheme was for first tier suppliers and advised that he would be concerned if it started to be pushed down the supply chain.

The PAC agreed that the threats to UKAS impartiality had been managed. Mr Nash suggested that the scheme could be discussed in the Management Systems Committee.

6.1.2 Agreement with DECC on EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) PAC/04/13

Ms Turner explained that this was a revision of an existing agreement on EU ETS to take account of Phase III of the scheme. The agreement contains certain requirements for providing information to the Department for Energy and Climate Control (DECC) and the Environment Agency as described in the paper. It was agreed that the potential conflicts of interest had been identified and satisfactory arrangements made for managing them.

6.1.3 Agreement with Energy & Utility Skills (EU Skills) – Waste management PAC/05/13

Ms Turner explained that this agreement was similar to the agreement with EU Skills presented to the last PAC meeting but in a different sector. Mr Nash raised the point that EU Skills was offering help and assistance to organisations coming forward for certification and this would need special attention from UKAS. Otherwise, the arrangements made for dealing with potential conflicts of interest were agreed.

6.1.4 Agreement with UK Drinking Water Regulators PAC/06/13

Ms Turner explained that this was an update to the agreement with the drinking water regulators to reflect an extension of the requirement for accreditation. The agreement requires UKAS to provide information to the regulators as described in the paper. PAC agreed that the arrangements made for dealing with potential conflicts of interest were satisfactory.

6.1.5 Agreement with Environment Agency – Monitoring Certification Scheme (MCERTS) PAC/07/13

Ms Turner explained that this agreement was being revised to bring radioanalysis under the MCERTS scheme and that again there were requirements for the provision of information. It was agreed that the arrangements made for dealing with potential conflicts of interest were satisfactory.

6.2 Pathways to accreditation PAC/08/13

Ms Turner explained that it was a strategic objective for UKAS to explore the development of a staged approach to accreditation in order to help small businesses. She said that a pilot scheme was under way on the Imaging Services Accreditation Scheme (ISAS) in order to address concerns about the low take up of ISAS. Research undertaken by the Colleges indicated that part of the reason for this was that departments found the accreditation process daunting and would be more likely to apply if a staged approach was available. Key points of the proposal were that: it was not intended to replace the usual route to accreditation, it was to provide an alternative; applicant would need some recognition of achievement of the different stages which would need to be very carefully managed; it would provide value to service purchasers and patients as well as the departments; current practice was to confirm the receipt of applications if requested; stages would be time limited, six months for each stage was proposed, to prevent applicants from stagnating. UKAS hoped to proceed with ISAS as a pilot quite quickly with the possibility of roll-out in other areas if successful.

Mr Gainsford agreed with the principle as reflected in discussion in PAF earlier but thought that the stage descriptions might be rather complex. The fee structure was also very important as was the time limitation at each stage. The application fee might also provide an incentive to complete the process.

Prof Newland agreed that this was the right approach. It was important for ISAS to have a staged approach but he also noted that CPA mistakes, around the award of provisional accreditation, had

been avoided. He agreed the need for time limits on each stage.

Dr Llewellyn agreed that this approach could be helpful for smaller labs in spreading the costs. He suggested that the approach could be launched at a BMTA event in June but Ms Turner said that the intention was to run a pilot with ISAS first.

Prof Sharp agreed with the approach. He commented that CPA accreditation was still developing and unaccredited laboratories still found the accreditation process daunting. He suggested that the staged approach could also be considered for ISO 15189 (the standard for medical laboratories).

Mr Nash agreed the approach and supported a wider roll-out. He also agreed the need to consider how recognition of the stages would be used and how the time limitations at each stage would work.

Mr Mortimer had some concerns about how the staged approach would be used and how recognition of the stages would be presented. He advised that the Commission was looking very critically at the definition of accreditation and the activities of national accreditation bodies. He remained to be convinced that the approach would bring the desired increase in uptake and that it justified the reputational risk to UKAS.

Mr Stennett considered that UKAS needed to respond to the concerns of the Colleges. This was proposed as a test case using ISAS. It was not proposed to launch the staged approach more widely yet but it might be necessary to achieve growth in the health sector. Ms Turner agreed that it was very important that the recognition of the stages was well controlled and there could be benefit in having definitive listings on the UKAS website. UKAS would be meeting the Colleges to discuss how to publicise and communicate the scheme.

The Chairman concluded that there was consensus that there was a need for a staged process but some doubts about how the scheme would be publicised. These issues should be resolved between UKAS and BIS.

7.3 Follow up to PAF strategy discussion

Mr Stennett referred to comments by Mr Nash at PAF relating to the provision of information about the peer evaluation process. He confirmed that any points leading to changes in UKAS procedures would be communicated to customers. Mr Nash commented that communication had much improved in recent years.

Mr Stennett also referred to the comments that greater transparency was being required in the health sector. He confirmed that this was providing some interesting challenges for UKAS and could lead to demands for greater disclosure in more traditional areas.

8- Any Other Business

The Chairman thanked the committee for its co-operation during his term of office. Mr Pearson thanked Dr Jones, on behalf of PAC members, for his very capable chairmanship over the past three years.

9- Next Meetings

The following dates and venues for future meetings were confirmed:

PAC	Thursday 4 July 2013 (Lansdowne Club)
PAC	Thursday 7 November 2013 (Feltham)
PAF/PAC	Thursday 6 March 2014 (BIS Conference Centre)