UNITED KINGDOM ACCREDITATION SERVICE

POLICY ADVISORY FORUM

**Draft Report of 10ᵗʰ Meeting**
**Held on Tuesday 8ᵗʰ September 2020 (virtually)**

**1- Welcome and Opening remarks – Lord Lindsay (UKAS Chairman)**

**Lord Lindsay** welcomed members and stakeholders noting that this was the first time the PAF had ever met virtually. He added that this was the 25ᵗʰ anniversary since the establishment of UKAS.

He outlined the challenges UKAS and its stakeholders have faced during this extraordinary year recognising that the continuing fallout and uncertainty has had enormous impacts on the way UKAS,our direct customers and broader stakeholders work and paid tribute to the way UKAS and many of its stakeholders have adapted and responded to the pandemic.

He welcomed the newest PAF Members: The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, DCMS and the Institute of Directors and extended a particular welcome to **Will Creswell** who has replaced Sarah Smith at the OPSS, the UKAS sponsor directorate within BEIS, adding that Will be updating the PAF on OPSS priorities later.

**Secretary's note –** DCMS and IoD were unfortunately unable to attend the event.

He reiterated that despite the virtual format, the PAF is our key stakeholder event; a crucial part of UKAS governance. It provides an opportunity to update stakeholders on the work and achievements over the past year and to outline UKAS policies and strategic direction going forward. But most importantly, it is an opportunity for UKAS to listen to and understand stakeholders' priorities, issues and concerns to help guide our approach.

He then briefly outlined the morning's agenda, highlighting that this year, for the first time, there will be an opportunity to discuss key issues, identified by PAF Members in advance of today, in a number of breakout groups, before outlining the themes and UKAS facilitators.

**Secretary's note:** Details of the themed discussions groups are summarised at Annex B.

He concluded by wishing everyone a successful and productive morning before handing over to the **PAF Chair, Ron Gainsford**

**Secretary's note**: A list of attendees and apologies received is attached at Annex A.

**2- Report on Policy Advisory Council (PAC) activities in 2019.20 – Ron Gainsford**

The **Chair** added his welcome to the members reiterating that this is an opportunity for PAF members to feed their views into UKAS so that UKAS can consider and respond. He went on to also welcome new PAF members adding that PAF Members now totalled more than 120 and that the majority of their representative organisations were present today. He reiterated **Lord Lindsay's** comment that even though this is a remote event it is equally as important as a physical PAF session and so the key opportunity for stakeholders to provide their views to UKAS. He then informed Members that the event, including the breakout group discussions will be recorded – to assist with accurate minute taking and to ensure no important points are missed.

The Chair then reminded Members that the Policy Advisory Committee is also meeting this afternoon and is the smaller, elected (drawn from the PAF) group of organisations that usually meets three times a year to discuss more detailed issues relating to UKAS policy. Before going on to report on PAC activities since the last PAF in March 2019, he reminded Members that as it is three years since the current PAC was last re-elected, UKAS has now invited nominations for the next three years.

**Secretary's note**: Details of the nomination process were set out in paper PAF/03/20 circulated with the agenda before the meeting .No responses were received by the deadline of 31st August.

The Chair then provided an overview of PAC activities: Since the last PAF in March 2019, the PAC has met four times in July 2019, November, March and June. In addition to the regular reports from Board meetings and on international, development and operational activities, the main subjects discussed at PAC meetings included: Brexit implications – which will be discussed further in the PAF breakout sessions - and the ongoing issue of non-accredited certification bodies. Since the last PAF, UKAS and ABCB has published an industry position statement endorsed by OPSS, Cabinet Office CQC, CTSI, Trade Association Forum, Small Business Commissioner and the IIOC. The statement highlights the importance of accredited certification and has been circulated widely, well received and been the centre piece of a campaign targeting SMEs about the importance of accredited certification. Following discussions and recommendations by PAC,UKAS has established a positive working relationship with Surrey County Council as our Primary Authority[1] and we are now working together to tackle the issue of rogue operators in this area.

This year, the PAC has also agreed MoUs with the Information Commissioner's Office on certification schemes for the GDPR and the Engineering Council on the post Hackitt Review work around assessment of the competence of relevant individuals involved with high risk residential buildings.

Long standing PAC vacancies for Public Health England and Federation of Small Businesses have now been filled with Anna Garrido and Ian O 'Donnell respectively.

**3-**

i. **Election of PAF Chair (PAF/02/20)**

At this point, the Chair handed over to Matt Gantley who introduced PAF/02/20 recommending the reappointment of Ron Gainsford for a further three year term as Chair of PAF and PAC. He confirmed that no other nominations were received by the deadline of 31 August and that UKAS was happy to support the nomination. After a vote conducted by a show of hands, there were no objections and the appointment were confirmed.

**Secretary's note:** As part of the Board effectiveness work, the UKAS board has decided that the PAF/PAC Chair should attend one UKAS Board meeting annually to report on PAC activities.

ii. **Confirmation of PAC membership for 2020-2022 (PAF/03/20)**

**Ron Gainsford** resumed the Chair and after expressing his thanks for the continuing vote of confidence from Members and to **Sarah Veale** and **Lord Lindsay** as Non-Executive Board Members, referred Members to PAF/03/2020 and advised that the membership of PAC needed to be confirmed for the next three years. He noted that the no changes were proposed, and no new nominations had been received. The PHE and FSB vacancies had also been recently filled. There were no objections and the PAC membership was confirmed for the next three years, as set out in the paper.

**4- Update from BEIS – Will Creswell**

**The Chair** then introduced **Will Creswell**, Deputy Director, OPSS who after congratulating **the Chair** for his reappointment gave a quick overview of the four key BEIS/OPSS priorities:

✓ Fighting Covid 19:  restoring livelihoods, supporting a safe return to work, rebuilding consumer confidence, accelerating the development, manufacture and deployment of an effective vaccine in UK and overseas.
✓ Backing business to ensure economy bounces back as quickly as possible: making the UK the best place in the world to start and scale a business and seize the opportunities of global free

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-authority-overview

trade. Levelling up the economic activity across all areas of the UK, promoting regulation that will supercharge growth and investment
- ✓ <u>Unleashing innovation:</u> Making the UK a science super power backing ideas and supporting talent from home and abroad. Doubling the investment in R&D. Increasing productivity to create more high value better paid jobs by boosting world class sectors.
- ✓ <u>Tackling climate change</u>: Driving a green economy and green recovery, boosting productivity by becoming a leader in clean technologies by becoming a world leader in green technologies, infrastructure and energy. Achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Hosting a successful 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties in 2021.

**Will** stressed the vital role that standards and accreditation will play in delivering on all these priorities and how the work of UKAS and its stakeholders will be core to much of this work . He then informed PAF that a new BEIS Permanent Secretary, Sarah Mumby was appointed in July and emphasised her strong business and financial background.

<u>Brexit</u>: Regarding the end of the transition period at the end of the year, **Will** confirmed that the Government's  policy position is that UKAS will remain the sole National Accreditation Body after 31 December and that the requirements around not for profit status will be incorporated into the post transition regulations. On post Brexit arrangements for conformity assessment bodies, he reminded PAF of the recently published guidance on the use of the new UKCA mark and the transition process for Notified Bodies to Approved Bodies[2] in addition to  more detailed guidance on placing products on the GB/EU/NI markets. This guidance was continually being updated.

### 5 - Strategic Update/UKAS performance 2019/20  – Matt Gantley

**Matt** began by thanking the Chair, PAF Members and the BEIS/OPSS Team for their continued tactical support and strategic input. Speaking to the slides he then gave a high level strategic update covering the period since the last PAF in March 2019. As part of the context, he began by setting out the broader environment in which UKAS and the broader conformity assessment sector is now operating:

- Covid 19
- Political change and uncertainty (Brexit)
- Declining public trust
- Escalating environmental concerns
- Equality and inclusion
- Fourth Industrial Revolution

He added that UKAS is part of a very strong Assurance, Test Inspection and Certification sector which during this challenging time has demonstrated the resilience to continue to provide an effective service
Other key points made:

<u>International</u> – The international accreditation framework remains strong. Our relationship with ILAC/IAF will continue to be important. The strength and importance of mutual recognition agreements remains the same. The 'Tested Once, accepted everywhere' principle needs to be enshrined in trade agreements. We are also working closely with EA to retain our membership post- transition.

<u>Covid 19  - </u>early monitoring of the situation in China enabled UKAS to respond quickly and decisively and our guiding principles throughout the crisis have been safety, integrity, resilience, job security and stability.

<u>UKAS Strategic priorities </u>- The key dimensions of the eight strategic  priorities introduced last year remain and will continue to be robust as we move forward. But we will regularly review them to ensure that they continue to be relevant.

<u>Financial stability – </u>Despite having to revise financial projections due to the pandemic UKAS remains financially resilient. This is in part due to putting a number of non-essential projects on hold to ensure ongoing financial stability.

<u>Customer Service</u> -  Positive customer feedback indicates that we have been continuing to deliver a high quality service – exceeding our Net Promotor Score target of 50. We have also invested in a new sales,

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-the-ukca-mark-from-1-january-2021

training and marketing team.  Have put various measures in place to drive up performance and improve customer service.

Profile and influence -  e.g. New Primary Authority relationship with Surrey& Bucks County Council to tackle the issue  of non-accredited certification, continuing to work with Government to manage the impact of Brexit and support the conformity assessment industry, working with BEIS and NQI partners to develop a supported regulatory framework for the fourth industrial revolution.

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lectures planned before the end of the year.

UKAS Brand refresh -  Following a stakeholder consultation, the new UKAS logo and symbols for schedules will be launched at the end of the year; together with a new more user-friendly website and a new tagline 'A world of Confidence'. We will consult PAC on timings for the rollout of the new schedule symbols.

Development Activities – Despite the challenges of Covid 19, UKAS has managed to deliver a comprehensive development progamme with 55 live leads including Halal foods, Building Information Modelling, Forensics, Sexual Assault Referral Centres, Each Home Counts, GDPR.

In conclusion, Matt said that despite the challenges of the past year, UKAS is very much focused on the future and stressed the importance of hearing from stakeholders via the breakout groups on the opportunities and challenges for example from Brexit, from new technologies and whether UKAS has identified the right priorities going forward. Finally, he offered particular thanks to all the UKAS staff for their contributions and continuing resilience throughout the year.

**Secretary's note**: A copy of the slides presented to support this agenda item and item 6 are circulated with these minutes.

### 6 – International Programme  2020-2023- Lorraine Turner

Lorraine Turner spoke to the slides. Main points:

- Our contribution to international activities is very important not only to ensure that we are aligned with other countries but to facilitate mutual recognition and acceptance of accreditation.

- Grateful to receive some funding from BEIS to support our international activities; important because UKAS is representing the UK on the international stage including the interests of the broader conformity assessment sector.

- Next three year programme is impacted by two key events : i. Covid 19 ii. UK exit from the EU.

- Our membership of ILAC/IAF is unaffected by our departure from the EU

- UKAS will need to take account of structural changes to the international accreditation framework: i.  merger of ILAC and IAF ii. restructuring of EA Executive Committee.

### 7-  Introduction to breakout sessions

Before a short coffee break, the Chair briefly introduced how the sessions would work as set out in PAF/05/20

### 8- Feedback and Plenary

On return from the breakout sessions each facilitator fed back some key points from their respective discussion groups to the wider group. All of the facilitators agreed that the sessions were lively and productive and managed to address many if not all of the issues and questions raised by participants.

**Secretary's note:** Detailed summaries of all the themed discussions are attached at Annex A.

**9 – Any other business**

There was no other business raised.

**10- Confirmation of next meetings-**

The **Chair** confirmed the dates of the next PAC meetings. The date and format of next Year's PAF is still to be confirmed.

**PAC:**          **2 Feb 2021-  (venue TBC).**

**PAC:**           **18 May  2021- (UKAS, Staines) PAC/PAF:**

**PAF/PAC      September 2021- Date and venue TBC**

**11- Concluding remarks - Chair**

The **Chair** then thanked members for attending and for their valued input and contributions before closing the meeting.

**List of attendees**

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|---|---|
| Jane Pritchard | Association for Clinical Biochemistry |
| Wayne Terry | Association of British Certification Bodies |
| Nick Wright | Association of British Certification Bodies |
| Dr Kassiani Skordilis | Association of Clinical Pathologists |
| Martin Hanly | Association of Forensic Science Providers |
| John Freeman | Association of Independent Research and Technology Organisations |
| Simon Harpin | BEAMA |
| Raj Vagdia | BEAMA |
| Tony Smith | British Measurement and Testing Association |
| Carol Stewart | British Measurement and Testing Association |
| Daniel Mansfield | BSI Standards |
| Sue Brand | Care England |
| Vince Desmond | Chartered Quality Institute |
| Ron Gainsford | Chartered Trading Standards Institute |
| Gerry Dutton | Chartered Trading Standards Institute |
| Chelvi Leonard | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - OPSS |
| Will Creswell | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - OPSS |
| Danny Langley | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - OPSS |
| Richard Sanders | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - OPSS |
| Julian Farrel | Department for International Trade |
| Tom Digby-Rogers | Department for International Trade |
| Katy Turff | Engineering Council |
| Stefan Kukula | Engineering Equipment & Materials Users' Association |
| Gary Jones | Federation of Certification Bodies |
| Lee Horlock | Federation of Certification Bodies |
| Adam Cook | Food Standards Agency |
| David Franklin | Food Standards Agency |
| Simon Iveson | Forensic Science Regulation Unit |
| Dr Gillian Tully | Forensic Science Regulator |
| Andy Evans | GAMBICA |
| Richard Plant | Health & Safety Executive |
| Carl Rogers | Independent International Organisation for Certification |
| Sarah Carr | Information Commissioners Office |
| Christine Eckersley | Information Commissioners Office |
| David Wells | Institute of Biomedical Science |
| Martin Baxter | Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment |
| Christine Gray | Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency |
| Bethany Dunning | Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government |
| Keith Hayhurst | Ministry of Defence |
| Richard Brown | National Physical Laboratory |
| Anna Garrido | Public Health England |
| Caroline Hamilton | Safety Assessment Federation |

| Jane Banks | Science Council |
| Suzanne Henderson | Scottish Government |
| Ross MacSween | Scottish Government |
| Niall Kealey | Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders |
| Jon Vanstone | Trade Association Forum |
| Dr Jeff Llewellyn | UKAS |
| Lord Jamie Lindsay | UKAS |
| Prof Adrian Newland | UKAS |
| Philip Rycroft | UKAS |
| Michael Mainelli | UKAS |
| Kevin Belson | UKAS |
| Matt Gantley | UKAS |
| Lorraine Turner | UKAS |
| Jeff Ruddle | UKAS |
| Hugh Taylor | UKAS |
| Suzi Daley | UKAS |
| Sarah Veale | UKAS |
| Mark Bohun | UKAS |
| Paul Greenwood | UKAS |
| Emily Robinson | UKAS |
| Natasha Masterman | UKAS |
| Tracy Pia | UKAS |
| Rachel Oakley | UKAS |

## Apologies

| Dr Neil Anderson | Association for Clinical Biochemistry |
| Steve Russell | Association of British Certification Bodies |
| Dr Jane Gate | Association of Independent Research and Technology Organisations |
| Chris Stammers | BEAMA |
| Steve Hayes | EMC Test Labs Association |
| Paul Bailey | Engineering Council |
| Ian O'Donnell | Federation of Small Businesses |
| Rick Mumford | Food Standards Agency |
| Chris Rowe | Health & Safety Executive |
| Helen Moores | Information Commissioners Office |
| Matthew Smith | Institute of Biomedical Science |
| Chris Elliott | Ministry of Defence |
| David Thomas | Ministry of Defence |
| Fiona Auty | National Physical Laboratory |
| Rob Bettinson | UKAS |
| Stephen Mitchell | UKAS |
| Malcolm Hynd | UKAS |

Summaries of the themed breakout discussion groups

**Theme 1 - Opportunities and challenges from Brexit**
UKAS Facilitator - Lorraine Turner  (Technical and Business Development Director)

**Questions**

1. What more can UKAS do to ensure that UKAS accredited conformity assessment continues to be widely accepted at home and internationally after the transition period?"

2. How important is it for UKAS to maintain a close future relationship with EA?

3. Are there advantages/opportunities by focusing more on non-EU markets? Do you have examples?

4. (In addition to EA/ILAC/IAF) which international organisations does UKAS need to foster closer relationships with?

5. What else does UKAS need to do to maintain its global reputation?

**Key Discussion Points**

It is very important to stakeholders that high standards are maintained and that UKAS accreditation continues to be recognised globally. UKAS has a role in not only pushing for the acceptance of UKAS accreditation but also communicating the importance of mutual recognition, the role of peer evaluation, the principles of *"accredited once, accepted everywhere"* and why this is important to businesses in relation to international trade. UKAS can support stakeholders in dispelling myths and providing input to BEIS on needed policy clarification and guidance.

- It was suggested that UKAS could do more to communicate the distinction between product certification and management systems certification and to provide reassurance regarding the recognition of UKAS accredited management systems certification. Ideally statements could be made available on the UKAS and EA websites.

UKAS has a strong global reputation and it is vital that it maintains a high profile in the global environment.

- UKAS and UK accredited organisations are well thought of and it is important that this reputation is sustained and reinforced; UKAS needs to promote itself.

- UKAS has gained significant experience in remote assessment and taken a lead in Europe and globally on this; this demonstrates its influence and should be reinforced and capitalised on.

It is important that UKAS maintains a close relationship with the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) to enable it to influence from within, and to communicate the reasons why and the benefits that this brings. Given the current uncertainty regarding Europe it was suggested that the best strategic approach would be to keep all options open.

Consensus was that EA will want UKAS to remain a member, but in case a political decision is taken that results in UKAS not being in a position to remain a member, other options need to be considered. Communication of contingency plans to stakeholders would help to provide confidence. UKAS could look at:
- Direct IAF/ILAC membership
- Membership of another IAF/ILAC recognised regional accreditation group/body

Regional membership facilitates benchmarking and avoids risk of isolation and divergence. It enables comparison with other Accreditation Bodies, not just in terms of technical robustness but also relating to cost, timeliness and other aspects relating to service delivery.

It was suggested that UKAS could consider:
- Closer relationships with commonwealth countries
- Other regional membership e.g. Pacific region [Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC)]

It was noted that mutual recognition is not dependent on EA membership and that this may need to be made clearer and reinforced. Trade negotiation outcomes will influence decisions.

In terms of fostering closer relationships with other international organisations, the following were mentioned:
- United States Department of Labor
- Medical Device Single Audit Program (MDSAP) [a working group of the International Medical Device Regulators Forum (IMDRF)]

Many bodies are more geographical than political e.g. European Higher Education Area, European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI) [not just EU]. This adds weight to the case for UKAS being able to remain an EA member.

UKAS has provided informing advice to BEIS on the differences between approaches to accreditation in the US and the UK (open competitive market in the US for accreditation), highlighting the associated risks.

From a trading standards perspective, the introduction of new UK Conformity Assessed (UKCA) marking provides an opportunity to assume a level of robustness over and above the CE mark which will be critical to business and to the role of UKAS. Initially regimes will continue as they are now, but it will be important for UKAS to retain awareness of changes to requirements and any divergence.

UKAS recognises the need to push very strongly within EA the technical equivalence of UK product marking, aside from the political decisions that are being made. Even if there is no longer acceptance of UKAS accreditation in support of EU regulation there might be some UKAS accredited conformity assessment of products that is then taken into account by EU notified bodies, and there should not be a restriction on that being accepted, because technically that should remain valid. This has been discussed with BEIS and EA and we will continue to push this point.

Link to UKAS website news item for reference:
- [BEIS provide further detail on transition from CE markings to UKCA](#)


**Q & A**

Q: *There is some concern that overseas sites of international organisations are less sure about what the rules and regulations will be after the Brexit transition period than UK sites, and that salespeople for CE marked products are misleading them by stating that UK CE marked products will need to be replaced following transition to meet legal requirements. How can this be addressed more broadly?*

A: UKAS has a role in not only pushing for the continued acceptance of the conformity assessment work that has been done in the UK under UKAS accreditation, but also in dispelling myths and providing support to UKAS accredited notified / approved bodies. Some aspects of this are outside the remit of UKAS but it informs the questions that UKAS is putting to BEIS around guidance that needs to be issued.

Q: *The commission are saying that only notified bodies in Northern Ireland can certify for the NI market, but why can't a GB notified body still certify for CE marking for Northern Ireland?*

A: CE marked goods will still be able to be placed on the market in NI. UK Notified Bodies will also be able to evaluate goods to be placed on the NI market, these will be marked CE UK NI. UKAS is expecting that existing UK notified bodies will be transferred to being UK Approved Bodies, but we will also be looking to retain on their scopes of accreditation their ability in the references to the European legislation for the purposes of Northern Ireland. Technically, unless there is divergence of the technical requirements, their existing competence will cover both.

**Q:** *What measures are being considered to 'push' the new UKAS branding beyond Europe?*

**A:** UKAS will communicate roll-out of the UKAS logo and accreditation symbols, and importantly these will look like a 'family'. There will be a transition period with both brands in the marketplace – these will have a common thread (the crown, the tick and the general graphic – *more a 'refresh'*). UKAS will also rely on all stakeholders to support the roll-out and will react to any problems identified.

**Q:** *What does UKAS need to do to confirm that conformity assessment bodies required to have accreditation (the 'non-converted community') have been able to give a view on UKAS links with international organisations?*

**A:** In areas where accreditation is required this is often linked to regulation that is probably European centred, so the impact on changes to legislation and also retaining the role for UKAS accreditation in any revised legislation is something that we know we need to be pushing for, or at least raising awareness of the benefits of using accreditation to support regulation.

**Q:** *How should UKAS be benchmarking itself on against other Accreditation Bodies within and outside of Europe? Benchmarking using a balanced scorecard type of approach would be a useful way to demonstrate the value of UKAS accreditation, which is very important to customers.*

**A:** UKAS is very keen to benchmark against other ABs, not only on technical performance but also customer service. UKAS has encouraged EA through input into its strategy that ABs are not just peer evaluated on technical performance but also business performance. It is important to UKAS to see where we sit on the customer service side as well as the critical technical credibility.

## Summary

Overall, the feedback reinforces and supports the direction that UKAS is taking in relation to our strategy to pursue retaining our full membership with EA, and also the second tier of our strategy if that is not possible. We also had some really helpful suggestions and other points that we need to take on board.

There is strong support for UKAS retaining its EA membership but also recognition that there are other back up options, particularly if we can get influence through other routes, directly with ILAC and IAF and perhaps also through another region.

What also came out strongly was the need for UKAS to communicate why it considers continued membership of EA to be important. It was good to get feedback on why stakeholders think it is important because this is not being pursued from a self-serving perspective but on behalf of the UK conformity assessment market and the market that relies on it. We will take an action from this with respect to communication on the importance of not just mutual recognition but also the role of regional groups, and how regional membership enables us to benchmark technically and from a customer service and business performance perspective.

Another point made was that we recognise EA as a regional, geographical group as well as a tool for the European Commission, but also how it interacts with other European stakeholder groups and how they are also regional, geographical groups. This gives us another strong element to the argument where we interact with European stakeholder organisations though EA, that would be lost, and they do not just serve the EU market.

With respect to changes to the UK CA marking and approved bodies, the main point coming out was that UKAS needs to facilitate communication of information on requirements and policies set by competent authorities and by government. We recognise that UKAS has a role in being a conduit for passing some of this information on.

In terms of our global reputation, a very good point was made that during the pandemic UKAS has been a front runner in many ways, particularly in terms of how remote assessments have been handled, and

that it has a strong global presence with CABs operating across the globe, and that we should capitalise on this.

**Theme 2 - Maintaining Technical excellence/expertise**
UKAS Facilitator – Kevin Belson (Technical Manager)

**Introduction**

FOR each group, Kevin provided a brief introduction to the topic including a brief overview of current mechanisms for gaining technical input from stakeholders, including the role of Technical Advisory Committees.

**Questions**

1. How can UKAS work with its stakeholders to build and future-proof a pipeline of technical expertise?

2. What specific technical skills will UKAS need going forward?

3. How can UKAS continue to access technical expertise?

4. How can UKAS utilise expertise differently whilst maintaining confidence in the assessment process?

**Summary**

The four questions above were considered as a whole (as opposed to going through them one by one).

The level of discussion in general was very strong and constructive with excellent ideas being put forward.

There were a number of ideas on where UKAS may source technical expertise including the use of promoting UKAS and Accreditation in general through higher educational institutes and training organisations. Some suggested that Accreditation could become a career path for some students.

It was also stated that UKAS could develop and "informed" group of technical people to cakl on as and when needed.

There was a feeling that the use of remote assessment techniques may lead to more technical experts coming forward in that they could offer their technical expertise remotely without having to travel to assessment locations.

Similarly, the use of remote meetings will encourage more input into Technical Advisory Committees and other fora or this type.

the idea of "horizon scanning" was a popular theme, investing time into looking at what is likely to come up on the future so that technical input and technical resource is considered at the earliest possible stage. This is already done to some degree, but we could look at further opportunities for this.

It was pointed out that when implementing any measures around technical competence in the assessment teams we should always consider the needs of the end user of accredited activities.

**Specific points from each group**

Group 1

- it can be difficult to get stakeholders to participate. May be helpful to use more informal methods (e.g. WhatsApp groups) for things like TACs.
- now we are getting used to virtual meetings, it may be easier to have more regular contact.

- it can be difficult for new members to get up to speed because virtual meetings don't allow people to have conversations in the margins, and anything you say is said to everyone, can be intimidating for someone new who's finding their feet.
- UKAS could use specific recruitment companies to help identify candidates for specific needs or vacancies.
- due to Covid-19, now could be a 'buyer's market' for recruitment as a lot of good people were looking for work.
- UKAS could do more to promote itself in professional bodies (e.g. IET which he was a member of). There was a general feeling that UKAS could/should do more to promote accreditation as a career.
- KB explained about the idea of a European repository of experts but said it had not got off the ground and that there was a danger that UKAS was likely to be a 'net loser' as others exploited its expertise resources. But also highlighted that it is common practice for European ABs to share details of technical resource.
- it was felt that the current Assessment Mgr + Technical Expert approach worked reasonably well, and we need to be careful not to damage this, for instance by using remote Tech Experts who didn't contribute as fully, or if AMs were trying to take on the Tech Expert role where they were not sufficiently experienced.


## Group 2

- It was explained how MHRA invested in horizon scanning and had an "innovation office".
- like-minded organisations ('public good' bodies) could share horizon scanning, perhaps with an annual 'conference'. HSE also has an excellent horizon scanning team looking at what new technologies were coming into the world of work.
- a lot of people may be experts in their field but have no idea about conformity assessment. It would be helpful if there was more information available – what does it mean to be a technical expert, as this would encourage more people to come forward.
- It was pointed out that UKAS is doing horizon scanning on 4IR with BSI and NPL, facilitated by BEIS.
- the Science Council viewpoint was to look at all the scientific technicians who are expected to make a "technical commitment" and UKAS could tap into this – there is an expectation that technicians will get more widely involved with things outside their immediate day job.
- we could also tap into higher education establishments
- we need to focus on the ultimate end-user. What consistency and standards do they need?
- there was strong support for the idea of using online remote Tech Experts during audits/assessments, saying a lot has changed in recent months to make this possible and acceptable.
- BMTA members have often allowed remote witnessing of testing by their customers, this is well established.
- it was pointed out that this was common in pharma using CCTV, because physical access to the lab or production line often wasn't permitted for hygiene reasons.


## Group 3

- thought that virtual meetings were a big help in getting more stakeholder to participate.
- it was pointed out that Forensics was moving into new areas (e.g. RTC investigation) and this meant that the experts in these new areas usually had no grounding in quality systems and therefore the use of an Assessment Manager plus a Tech Expert was often unavoidable.
- participants asked how UKAS had traditionally identified its Tech Experts. KB said there was no one particular route, and it may depend on the sector/activity. HT commented that UKAS used LinkedIn quite a lot and that gave good a good reach through UKAS' "followers" and the personal networks of UKAS employees.
- noted that AI is a future challenge. HT mentioned that UKAS is working with BSI, NPL and BEIS on regulation for the 4th Industrial Revolution.

<u>Group 4</u>
- participants stressed the excellent experience contained within PAC and that UKAS could tap into this.
- the skills we would need for the future were being partly identified by the other themes being discussed today.
- it was asked if it was a challenge to bring people through into Assessor/Tech Expert roles?  The general answer is 'yes'.
- suggested more could be done to make it an aspirational career move.
- suggested universities should be approached as we need to promote accreditation/certification as part of the syllabus for many courses.
- it was asked if for emerging technologies, UKAS looked outside the UK.  KB explained current practices for this, we are able to call on other AMs for technical experts.
- it requires the right blend of skills and expertise, and it was essential to bring the right people through.
- suggested UKAS should look at the Brydon report into the quality of financial auditing.  HT said that UKAS was aware of this report.

**Theme 3 – Impact of new technologies**
UKAS Facilitator – Jeff Ruddle (Strategic Development Director)

For each group Jeff introduced the Theme explaining that the key aim of the session is to discuss the impact new technologies may have on the way in which UKAS and UKAS customers are operating and will operate, in the future.

**Questions**

1. What more can UKAS do to identify early accreditation opportunities from emerging technologies?

2. Are there specific new technologies which UKAS should be utilising/preparing to utilise?

3. How should new technologies affect the way UKAS works?

4. How are new technologies affecting the way that conformity assessment bodies work?

**Key Discussion points**

There is a significant requirement for UKAS to embrace new technologies, due to the improved service efficiencies, being "ahead of the trend" on a global scale, and the accreditation opportunities, that could be offered.

**New areas of Accreditation and Technologies**

UKAS should assess the risks across each marketplace, to determine any new offering of accreditations, to provide assurance against marketplace risks and issues, specifically relating to new technologies.
There are several areas that UKAS could look to offer potential accreditation opportunities. The main focus should not only be the system, process or technology being used, but also the associated risks and how accreditation can help minimize these risks. Areas and technologies UKAS should consider further developing are:
- Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically within:
  o Healthcare sector
  o Rare Earth elements, such as: Conflict Minerals, Supply Chains and Lithium (Car Batteries)
  o Food Authenticity and Origin – assurance to verify comparative data from private databases

- Block chain development to allow Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies to work on a global scale, with data sets
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Machine Learning (ML)
- Virtual Reality (VR), particularly for areas like fire and collision scene investigations (NPL currently looking at for proficiency testing)
- Horizon Scanning
- Carbon Capture Storage, as part of organisations focused on becoming Carbon Neutral
- 3D Printing, specifically relating to product Certification Bodies and regulated goods, under the UK CA Mark
- Cyber Security – privacy data risks within databases and ensuring data passed between organisations is verified and secure
- GDPR Protection certification schemes
- Under-pinning regulations for technology use within pre-inspections
- UK CAMarking

## Relationships with key organisations

As part of the national quality infrastructure , UKAS is working with BEIS/OPSS, NPL and BSI to ensure a coordinated approach towards regulation for the 4th Industrial Revolution, and how this will affect the UK's quality infrastructure.

Accreditation opportunities and the use of new technologies, could be increased by liaising further with organisations and Government Departments, such as the below:

- BEIS
  Specifically relating to Climate Change and the UK CA Mark, which could bring further opportunities. For example, a "CA Plus" version of the CA UK Mark, could be developed with additional aspects, similar to the principle of Cyber Plus.
  BEIS would welcome improvements, following the CA UK Mark roll-out.
- IAQG Oasis database
  Looking at how data could be more collaboratively used across organisations.
- DCMS
  For assurance mechanisms with Smart Devices and IoT using the ETSI Standards. UKAS is currently working with DCMS on the proposed regulation for IoT including the role of accredited certification .
- IEC and ISO
  To identify emerging technologies that could provide accreditation opportunities. Currently, liaisons are more focused on updating standards.
- Broader UK Government
  Although Covid-19 and Brexit are currently the main focus, over the next 3-4 years there will be a large focus on the use of data and technology. Consideration is required, as to how the Government will manage and implement the technologies, and the application of data, in a quality assured way.
- NCS
  There is an interest in several new technology related schemes.

## Technologies currently being used

Many sectors are already using new technologies. One of the main technologies currently being used is AI.

Healthcare sector appears to be a leader in the use of AI and ML, particularly cyber technology and digital pathology. AI helps support administrative functions and address workforce inadequacy, within the sector; however, validity is important.

UKAS should work with AI leaders, to formulate guidance on how conformity may look when delivering specific medical tests in the health sector. Consideration of what this may look like is required . For example included as part of a revised ISO 15189 (requirements for quality and competence in medical laboratories), or be included in future laboratory standards.

However, UKAS could help support new technologies further, by adapting some of the accreditation processes:

- o Shared Learning
  When deploying new technology across several areas, it would be beneficial to share the assessment outcome and learning from the visit, with other sections who are completing the same line of work.
- o Pre-approval Accreditation Process
  When technology is used across multiple sites, it would be useful if one assessment was conducted at 1-2 of the main locations, to fully accredit and validate; followed by, less in-depth verifications across the rest of the sites. This process could be used instead of a full in-depth assessment being conducted at each site. This would significantly support the quick and efficient roll out of new technology across more sites.

Other areas already using AI, are the MOD which is using AI for Safety Environment issues, as well as the inspection sector. Within the Inspection sector, the interaction between virtual inspection techniques and remote inspection techniques, is being looked at. However, using virtual means and data usage, has been used for some time.

It is important to focus on the supporting element for pre-inspection, not only the statuary requirements but also ensuring the technology is moving at a pace where it can support. More technology to support pre-inspections, would allow the inspection sector to be more prepared and support the safety element further.

There seems to be a lack of rules and regulations for using technology within inspection and therefore, it is currently being used as a support mechanism, rather than relied upon solely. New or updated standards could be required to under-pin this.

It was proposed, AI could be used in multiple ways, as part of the assessment process. AI could assist UKAS with risk assessments and profiling of customers. It could also be used during assessments, by checking an organisation's adherence to the quality standards, on behalf of the assessment team, which is then followed up with a review/discussion.

**Impacts on CBs and conformity assessment**

Covid-19 has drastically impacted how organisations have been working. Many organisations (particularly CBs) who previously were conducting very few remote audits/assessments, have changed the way in which they operate, to remote working.
CBs are not currently considering using technologies to change the assessment process to be data focused. The current focus is to move towards a more blended auditing approach, with a mix of on-site and remote assessments.
CBs and their clients have experienced the benefits of remote assessing, as it removes the barrier of getting resources to site; however, the process could be more efficient which technologies like AI, would help to improve.

Using technologies such as, IoT and AI could bring more opportunities for remote assessing through different ways and processes. Using other means of new technologies will need consideration, as to how these could be used to help continue to improve the process. It was confirmed, remote and blended assessment guidance, is currently being worked on, with contributions from the EA, having been requested.

**Summary**

Overall, the importance of embracing new technologies is essential, especially since the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit, with remote working being used more frequently across all organisations.
There are several areas of technology, some already being used such as AI, in which UKAS should be focused on supporting, by under-pinning with accreditation. Any new accreditations to support new technologies, should be driven by the key risks and issues found within the marketplace, ensuring validity, compliance and assurance, when using technology.

**Theme 4 - Covid 19 and the Post Covid World**

UKAS Facilitator – Paul Greenwood (Operations Director)

Paul Greenwood introduced each session with a brief summary of the remote assessment approach, the reasons it was needed and the speed with which it had been implemented to enable assessment work to continue. Paul asked for feedback from the participants in relation to individual experiences and encouraged feedback on what had worked well, any areas that could be developed and what risks and opportunities remote assessment presented as well as any comments on the technologies used for remote assessments.

**Questions**

1. What more can UKAS do develop and embed the new working practices introduced in response to Covid 19 to improve future business practices?

2. In the future, what should the mix of on-site and remote assessment look like?

3. What are the risks and opportunities when utilising different assessment tools? How should these be managed?

4. Will greater use of risk based assessments increase access for SMEs?   What more can UKAS do to ensure that UKAS accredited conformity assessment continues to be widely accepted at home and internationally after the transition period?"

**Key Discussion Points**

The following is a summary of the points made by each breakout group.

*Breakout Group 1*

A more blended approach was discussed. A Head Office audit done remotely had been successful and should continue to be done that way, however it was felt that when an auditor (of the CB) goes out on-site then a site assessment should be done.

It was felt that there are certain aspects that lend themselves better to remote assessment such as the office based assessment, but that the audits done by CBs of their own clients are more high risk to continue to do remotely. There was a comment made about how observational the assessments would become.

Remote assessment allows many more people to participate and engage in the process.

It may be that CBs will start to do more remote auditing although the timescales over which this approach could continue would and should be limited.

A risk based approach was supported. The MHRA already employ a risk based approach and it seems to work well. Time spent on their assessments is dependent upon compliance history but they have additional inputs into the risk rating process which UKAS may not. They have found reviewing data to be relatively straightforward but physically assessing manufacturing processes has been the most significant challenge.

It is harder to build a rapport with the assessment team and the customer when doing an assessment remotely and it doesn't lend itself to the open discussions that often take place when the assessment is done face-to-face.

With SMEs, it would be incumbent on UKAS to establish public trust in the process (if remote assessment was to be used). Public trust was felt to be important to reinforce end user confidence regarding actions taken to confirm ongoing competence/compliance/integrity during lockdown

Remote assessment provides the possibility to use specialist experts to assess a certain part of the assessment for a shorter period of time.

It is not thought that there would be a rush of SMEs if a risk based approach was employed as there is still a cost to them in preparing for assessment.

### Breakout Group 2

The remote approach has worked well. The challenge has been in carrying out witnessing and making sure that this is done effectively. The remote approach worked well at assessing the core management system and the assessment was conducted more thoroughly and provided the assessor with the opportunity to prepare beforehand. Works well for Head Office assessments. Keen to ensure the transparency and integrity of their industry though and ensure people have confidence in the process.

Some discussion about the use for witnessing assessments and the use of Body/Hat Cams or handheld cameras to make this possible was suggested – particularly if UKAS could recommend or approve particular equipment. There are potential risks to this approach as some organisations will allow you to see what they want you to see and there is the possibility that issues picked up during a site visit may be missed by doing a remote assessment.

The impact on the environment and on the economy was felt to be beneficial.

It was suggested that it shouldn't be automatic to go back to doing an annual assessment. Risk based approach is preferred with good organisations benefitting from a less frequent assessment, whilst those that are not so good should be assessed more often.

The language/terminology used was felt to be important and ensuring that people understood what "remote" assessment means and that they shouldn't be alarmed by that – using terms such as blended approach has been really useful to allay fears. It would be important to promote the benefits of a blended approach.

It would be helpful to have direct access to an organisation's records/certificates for remote assessment.

### Breakout Group 3

One participant had had an extension to scope that had been assessed remotely and had found this to have been very successful.

One challenge was the assessors having access to the technologies and knowing how to use it. **There was a call that, with greater experience of remote assessment and more time in which to plan for assessments, UKAS could potentially bring external assessors more up to speed with remote tools and techniques.**

It was felt that greater use of a risk based approach to assessment and in determining which method of assessment would be beneficial.

New SMEs might need more on-site assessment particularly initially as opposed to using remote assessment, but it was felt that they could be given the option. It wasn't felt that remote assessment would necessarily help SMEs to save on costs as they would still need to employ resource to set up their systems and prepare for assessment – also that remote assessment might not be the most useful way to help them achieve accreditation.

The changes made due to the Covid situation have removed barriers to change and provide a good opportunity that shouldn't be wasted. The move to remote assessment was seen as being a positive move. Cost savings was seen as a particular benefit.

There should be engagement with the customer regarding the risk based approach and promoting the cost benefits. There are hidden costs in the time needed to e.g. to film methods in advance of the assessment.

**A specific request from BEIS (Q&A below) to extend the offer of structured/staggered payment plans as far as possible to support smaller businesses.**

UKAS needs to make sure that our assessments don't just turn into a standard assessment visit conducted via Teams/Skype or Zoom and there is an opportunity right now to innovate on delivering robust assessments in a different way if we can – focus on accreditation outcomes.

NATO SRD standards were mentioned and the benefits of using these for planning.

### Breakout Group 4

The response by UKAS to the pandemic and implementation of the remote assessment approach was hugely appreciated and the way in which UKAS quickly adapted to the new way of working.

There is still some work to do to improve the arrangements of assessments though (although no specific details were given).

It was felt that customers were being asked to provide a lot more information up front which, for them, was time consuming in gathering all the information together to send through. There was a feeling that assessment was being done more thoroughly as a lot more was able to be reviewed offline compared to on site assessment, which was seen as a positive.

The face-to-face interactions and the nuances that can be seen are lost with the remote assessment.

The speed with which assessment of Covid related testing has been done was commented on and the benefits of this and it was suggested that a fast track process could become a routine process to speed up the accreditation process. Normally, it takes months or even years to bring a new method on-line with all the assessment required but during the pandemic this has been reduced to days – how can we maintain at least some element of the decision making and agility that has been demonstrated by CABs and UKAS going forwards?

**It was felt that developing tools to facilitate the remote assessment of new applicants or extensions to scope should be a focus, therefore negating the requirement for an on-site visit.**


**Q & A**

**Q:** *Are remote assessment tools suitable for assessing a new applicant testing/calibration lab?*

**A**: It is possible for remote assessment to be done in this case, but the approach would need to be considered based on risk. It was accepted that for new applicants where there is little history, the risk would higher and an on-site visit is more likely to be required.
A comment was made that an on-site visit would be essential for a calibration laboratory.

**Q:** *Will assessments continue to be done yearly or might the accreditation cycle and frequency of visits change?*

**A:** The current approach is to continue doing annual assessment, but this is something that UKAS may consider doing in future using a risk based approach.
Some participants were keen on this approach and felt that it would help those good organisations whilst ensuring that those that were not very good to be assessed more often.

**Q:** *Can organisations be permitted to stagger payments for their assessments to help, in particular, smaller businesses? (FSA would be supportive of this).*

**A:** This is already a possibility and is in place for some organisations, and so is something that could be considered for some businesses.
There seemed to be a lack of awareness that this was already an option.

**Summary**

There were a lot of positive comments and strong support for the remote assessment approach. Those who had had direct experience of this thought that it had worked well and were appreciative of UKAS's efforts in ensuring that assessments had been able to continue during the Covid pandemic. An interesting comment was made about the speed with which accreditation had been obtained (related to Covid activities) and how they would like to see the development of a fast track approach to getting accreditation.

There was further support for the remote approach to continue to be used in future and for UKAS not to lose an opportunity to develop this further. It was felt that remote assessment was particularly suited to the certain types of assessment, e.g. of Head Offices and Management Systems, which lend themselves well to being assessed remotely. However, there was more concern about using remote assessment where witnessing of tests, calibrations or on-site audits was needed and the risk of customers being selective about what they showed to the assessor leading to the potential for issues to be missed.

One of the benefits highlighted of remote assessment was the thoroughness of the assessment approach with information being provided prior to the assessment enabling the assessor to prepare well for the assessment. Although for some organisations it was felt that it took more time for information to be prepared in preparation for assessments, when normally this would be requested/witnessed and assessed during an on-site assessment.

Other benefits that were highlighted was the reduction in travel and the impact for the environment and the reduction in costs related to travelling to sites.

A perceived drawback of remote assessment was the lack of face-to-face contact between the assessment team and the customer and the lack of rapport that is built up during a site visit. Discussions with the assessment team tend to be more open on site and there is more opportunity to spot issues by being present in the environment.

One area for improvement which was worth noting was in ensuring that assessors had access to the relevant technology and were trained in its use, which would be worth following up.

An overall perspective that the whole realm of conformity assessment has now irreversibly changed and needs the support of ABs to reinforce the "new normal".

Overall, there was support for remote assessment to continue to be used as an assessment tool and the blended approach of remote and some on-site assessment was widely supported as well as the use of a risk based approach to decide how assessments would be done. The importance of UKAS in managing the development and implementation of remote assessment as a tool and communicating its policy to customers/stakeholders/public to give confidence in the process was highlighted by some of the groups and is important for us to consider. The use of a risk based approach in increasing access for SMEs was generally supported although it was felt that new applicants would probably be deemed high risk initially and need on-site assessment, which would not provide them with much initial benefit. This may or may not lead to an increase in applications from new SMEs.

September 2020