

NINAS Accreditation - Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer	
<p>What is accreditation?</p>	<p>Accreditation is a formal, independent, third party recognition of competence to perform specific tasks.</p> <p>Applied to the quality field, accreditation is a formal third party confirmation that organizations providing conformity assessment services are technically competent to carry out their specific activities.</p>	<p>Accreditation is not recognition of quality of goods or services. Accreditation assesses conformity assessment bodies and confirms that they are technically competent.</p> <p>Accreditation does not guarantee each and every measurement/ test/ certification/ inspection made by the conformity assessment body but enhances competence of the conformity assessment body.</p>
<p>What gets accredited?</p>	<p>Organizations that evaluate the compliance and/or conformance of products, services and suppliers to requirements, aka CABs (Conformity Assessment Bodies), get accredited.</p> <p>There are different types of CABs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing laboratories, e.g. chemical, microbiology, food and associated products, engineering, textiles etc. • Calibration (measurement) laboratories, e.g. mass, volume, dimension, temperature, pressure, electrical, etc. • Medical laboratories, e.g. blood • Certification bodies, e.g. management systems (quality/ environment/ health/ safety/etc.), products and personnel. • Inspection bodies, e.g. import/export, pressure equipment, etc. 	<p>Products and services do not get accredited. Only CABs¹ get accredited.</p> <p>Business (e.g. manufacturers, exporters, etc.) do not get accredited. Only CABs get accredited.</p>

¹ CAB: Conformity Assessment Body, i.e. laboratory, certification body, inspection body

<p>Who provides accreditation?</p>	<p>Accreditation Bodies are in charge of providing accreditation.</p> <p>Accreditation Bodies check whether CABs² comply with all the requirements of the applicable standard and demonstrate that compliance through an assessment of the system.</p>	
<p>So what does accreditation mean specifically?</p>	<p>Accreditation means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CABs have been assessed against recognized standards to demonstrate their competence, impartiality and performance capability. • CABs are technically competent. • CABs are able to produce consistently reliable and impartial assessments. 	<p>Accreditation once does not mean that CABs are competent forever to perform their tasks. Once accredited, CABs must be re-assessed regularly to ensure continued compliance with requirements, and to check that the required standard of operation is being maintained.</p>
<p>Why is accreditation important?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation is now increasingly accepted worldwide as the most transparent and non-discriminatory mechanism to assure competency of CABs both in the voluntary and regulatory areas. • Accreditation facilitates acceptance and recognition of conformity assessment results issued by an accredited CAB. • Accreditation provides a means to identify a proven, competent evaluator so that the selection of a CAB is an informed choice. 	<p>Accreditation needs to be applied for by CABs.</p> <p>CABs' customers need to demand services from accredited CABs. Only then the benefits of accreditation to quality, health, safety and trade will be effective.</p>

² CAB: Conformity Assessment Body, i.e. laboratory, certification body, inspection body

<p>When does a CAB receive accreditation?</p>	<p>Accreditation is granted when the CAB applies for accreditation and demonstrates that it fully meets the requirements of relevant standards.</p> <p>Specialist technical assessors conduct a thorough evaluation of all factors in the CAB that affect the outcome of assessments, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical competence of staff (qualifications, training, experience) • appropriateness of assessment methods • the use of suitable equipment • safeguards to ensure impartiality and confidentiality • code of conduct and processes for working safely • effective quality assurance procedures • etc. 	<p>Having ISO 9001 certification does not equal to being accredited.</p>
<p>What does accreditation look like?</p>	<p>The accreditation itself is a document (a certificate of accreditation) that recognizes that the CAB³ is competent, reliable and compliant with relevant standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation is not an export certificate. Accreditation is recognition of the CAB. • Accreditation is not a quality certificate. Accreditation is recognition of the CAB.
<p>How do we know if a CAB is accredited?</p>	<p>Accredited CABs usually display a symbol in their certificates and promotional materials that indicates their accreditation.</p>	<p>Accreditation does not mean the CAB is technically competent to do everything. Accreditation is granted for specific assessment activities. Users of CABs services should check the CABs' Scope of Accreditation.</p>

³ CAB: Conformity Assessment Body, i.e. laboratory, certification body, inspection body

<p>What is the difference between accreditation and certification?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation is performed by an accreditation body (e.g. NINAS) while certification is performed by a certification body (e.g. SON, SGS...) • Accreditation focuses on CABs (laboratories, certification bodies, inspection bodies), while certification focuses management systems (e.g. ISO 9001), products or people. • Accreditation is formal recognition that CABs are technically competent and impartial to test/calibrate/ analyze/ certify/ inspect, while certification is recognition that a management system/product/person complies with standards. 	<p>Certification bodies must demonstrate to an accreditation body that they have the necessary competence to perform specified tasks before they can achieve accreditation.</p>
<p>What is the difference between accreditation and inspection or verification?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation is performed by an accreditation body (e.g. NINAS) while inspection is performed by an inspection body (e.g. Cotecna). • Accreditation focuses on CABs⁴ (laboratories, certification bodies, inspection bodies), while inspection focuses on products/services/ processes/installations. • Accreditation is formal recognition that CABs are technically competent and impartial to test/ calibrate/ analyze/ certify/ inspect, while inspection is an examination to determine conformity with requirements. 	<p>Inspection bodies must demonstrate to an accreditation body that they have the necessary competence to perform specified tasks before they can achieve accreditation. Inspection bodies inspect an object or installation to assure their conformance to standards. Verification bodies at present apply to the specific process of verifying greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
<p>What is internationally recognized accreditation?</p>	<p>International accreditation is a formal third party confirmation that organizations providing conformity assessment services are technically competent to carry out their specific activities, according to international standards and, that confirmation is accepted by other national accreditation bodies that are members of ILAC and IAF.</p>	<p>International Standards are an ideal management system model for laboratories/organizations because they aim to control quality costs, improve measurement accuracy and guarantee consistency of results.</p>

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<p>What is special about internationally recognized accreditation?</p>	<p>The difference between national and international accreditation lies in the standards used to evaluate the CABs (national vs. international standards) and in the type of accreditation body.</p>	<p>International accreditation assumes an equivalent technical competence and quality of output from bodies wherever they are located.</p>
<p>Why is international accreditation important?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International accreditation ensures a uniform approach worldwide to verifying CABs⁵ technical competence. • This consistent approach allows economies to establish cross border, mutual recognition agreements (MRAs), based on mutual evaluation and acceptance of each other’s assessment systems. • This system of international MRAs allows reports and certificates accompanying exported goods to be more readily accepted in participating economies without the need for additional testing. 	<p>An accreditation body with international recognition and MRAs facilitate the removal of barriers to trade in international markets when exporters contract the services of CABs with internationally recognized accreditation.</p>
<p>Who provides internationally recognized accreditation?</p>	<p>NINAS aims to be the first Nigerian accreditation body providing internationally recognized accreditation.</p> <p>Internationally recognized accreditation can only be granted by accreditation bodies that fulfill certain international standards (e.g. ISO 17011) and that are recognized by international organizations (ILAC, IAF) as full members.</p>	
<p>Do we need internationally recognized accreditation in Nigeria?</p>	<p>Yes. Nigeria has a large number of CABs that test, calibrate or certify products, services and systems. However, until now, there was no accreditation body to assess the competency of these CABs to international standards.</p>	<p>Not undergoing the process of certification of compliance to international standards is a source of quality issues that hinders exports, e.g.: rejection of consignments due to product failures</p>

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	<p>In fact, up until now, Nigerian CABs seeking internationally recognized accreditation had to refer to foreign accreditation bodies. This made the accreditation process cumbersome and only affordable to a few.</p>	<p>caused by questionable test results; re-testing of products due to inaccurate measurement caused by poorly or non-calibrated equipment; etc.</p>
<p>What is NINAS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NINAS stands for Nigerian National Accreditation System. • NINAS will be the national accreditation body for Nigeria that gives formal recognition that Laboratories, Certification Bodies, and Inspection Bodies are competent to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. • NINAS will be recognized internationally through multilateral recognition agreements (MRA). • NINAS will represent Nigeria on several African and international bodies: the West Africa Quality System (WAQS), the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). 	<p>For all CABs⁶ in Nigeria and in the West Africa region, NINAS will be the Nigerian national accreditation body that will provide credible, cost-effective accreditation services with international recognition.</p>
<p>What will NINAS do exactly?</p>	<p>NINAS will assess whether testing and calibration laboratories are technically competent, impartial and capable of performing testing/calibration tasks in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025.</p> <p>On a second phase, NINAS will also assess, in partnership with MLSCN, whether medical laboratories are technically competent, impartial and capable of performing testing tasks in accordance with ISO 15189.</p> <p>Finally, on a third phase, NINAS will assess whether certification bodies and inspection bodies are technically competent, impartial and capable of performing their tasks.</p>	<p>The roll-out of NINAS will take place in cooperation with other Nigerian partners.</p> <p>NINAS will perform its assessments by reviewing documents and performing audits on-site. A team of technical assessors will be appointed for each project.</p>

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<p>How is NINAS different from other accreditation bodies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NINAS will be a national body: as opposed to foreign accreditation bodies that currently act in Nigeria (e.g. a2La, EGAC). This makes NINAS more accessible and cost-effective. • NINAS will hold international recognition: as opposed to just national recognition (e.g. IPAN, MLSCN). 	<p>NINAS is different from SON and NAFDAC because NINAS is an accreditation body, while SON and NAFDAC are conformity assessment bodies. SON and NAFDAC certify/test/calibrate products, while NINAS accredits certification bodies such as SON and NAFDAC. SON and NAFDAC currently get accredited by foreign bodies; in future they can ask the accreditation services from NINAS.</p>
<p>How does NINAS fit into the NQIP?</p>	<p>NINAS is one component of the bigger National Quality Infrastructure Project (NQIP) for Nigeria. NQIP purpose is to improve the quality, safety, integrity and marketability of Nigerian goods and services and remove technical barriers to trade by having an adequate, effective and sustainable National Quality Infrastructure (NQI), consistent with international and regional principles and practices. NQI implies having -among other things- reliable conformity assessment bodies. NINAS will contribute to this objective by controlling and checking the standards of the CABs.</p>	<p>Other components of the NQIP are: quality legislation, national metrology institute, organized private sector and increased capacity of consumer associations. All these components together with NINAS will achieve the goal of improving quality and fostering trade.</p>
<p>Who will benefit from NINAS accreditation?</p>	<p>The society as a whole, including CABs⁷ (differentiation), exporters (promoting competitiveness, fostering trade), regulators (meeting regulatory objectives and obligations) and end-consumers (promoting health and safety).</p>	

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<p>How will NINAS foster trade?</p>	<p>NINAS will provide internationally recognized accreditation to CABs. The businesses and the exporters who use CABs accredited by NINAS will be able to compete more easily in international markets thanks to MRAs.</p>	
<p>How will NINAS promote quality and protect consumers?</p>	<p>NINAS will assess and recognize competency, impartiality, integrity and fulfillment of standards of CABs⁸. The accredited CABs will issue reliable reports, so that any quality issues will be detected before the goods & services reach the market, hence not putting at risk either health/safety/environment.</p>	

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