

# **APMP Guidelines for On-site Peer Reviews/Assessments under Unexpected Circumstance due to COVID-19**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 In APMP, the quality management system which underpins the CMCs of the participating institutes in the CIPM MRA <sup>[1]</sup> can be recognized by using one of the following 3 pathways <sup>[2]</sup>:

- (a) Third party accreditation, or
- (b) Certification to ISO 9001:2008 and attestation by technical peers, or
- (c) Attestation by a team consisting of quality system experts and technical peers.

1.2 It is the requirement of CIPM MRA that the quality management system shall undergo a general Review at a maximum interval of five years <sup>[3]</sup>.

1.3 In the context of the APMP-QS2 <sup>[2]</sup>, the Review here refers to on-site peer review on the quality management system conducted by both quality system (QS) experts and technical assessors/technical peers.

1.4 However, it may be impossible to carry out the planned Review because inviting experts from other economies (and sometimes even inviting local experts in most cases of QS reviews) is impossible due to travel restrictions caused by the spread of COVID-19.

1.5 The objective of this document is to provide guidelines for APMP Members unable to conduct their planned Reviews due to travel restriction resulting from the spread of COVID-19.

1.6 Guidelines are provided for each of the three pathways described in section 1.1.

1.7 The guidelines given in the document may be applied to similar future circumstances.

## **2. Recommendations and options**

### **2.1 Recommendation for Members following pathway (a)**

APMP Members following the pathway (a) is to follow the Guidelines provided by the respective national accreditation body, or the International Laboratory Accreditation

Cooperation (ILAC).

## **2.2 Recommendation for Members following pathway (b)**

### **2.2.1 Certification to ISO 9001**

APMP Members following the pathway (b) is recommended to follow the Guidelines provided by the respective national certification body, or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

### **2.2.2 Attestation by technical peers**

APMP decides that validity of the technical competence of APMP Members following pathway (b) is extended until six months after the pandemic is over. APMP recommends these Members to follow one of the 3 options listed below. These options are listed in preferential order.

#### **A. Option 1-Postponement**

- 1) To maximize the quality of the review, postponement is mostly recommended.
- 2) APMP Member facing an unexpected circumstance due to pandemic shall contact the relevant TC Chair and copy to the TCQS Chair, to request for approval of the review postponement.
- 3) Once it is admitted by the TC Chair, technical competence of the Member is recognized to be valid during the postponement period.
- 4) The maximum postponement allowed is six months after the end of the pandemic, which means that the Member shall finish the review, corrective actions if any, and the attestation by the reviewer(s) before this deadline.
- 5) The end of the unexpected situation of an economy is regarded as the time when both the international entry restrictions and the quarantine for in-coming travelers of the economy have been lifted.

#### **B. Option 2-Remote Review**

During the pandemic period, Members following pathway (b) are allowed to change the on-site review/assessment to a Remote Review, in which reviewers stay in his/her economy and take the review through online video communication with the Member under reviewing.

- 1) It should be noted that for Remote Reviews, only experts from NMIs/DIs may be reviewers.

- 2) After searching for reviewer candidate(s), the Member wishing to run a Remote Review shall check and confirm that video communication between the Member and the reviewer candidate(s) is smooth enough to run a Remote Review, and confidentiality is maintained.
- 3) Any planned Remote Review should be put forward by the Member by asking permission to run a Remote Review to the relevant TC Chair by submitting the form entitled “Format for Technical Peer Approval” given in the APMP-QS2 document.
- 4) Relevant TC Chair shall contact the reviewer candidate and confirm the availability of the smooth video communication and confidentiality.
- 5) When the application is approved, all information necessary for the review shall be sent to the reviewer at least one month ahead of the review so that the reviewer can have enough time to review the documents before the Remote Review.
- 6) The Member under review shall ensure that the reviewer(s) will be able to see every places he/she would see in a normal on-site peer review.

### **C. Option 3-Review by Local Expert**

In normal situations, whereas it is a common practice to utilize local QS experts for QS reviews, local experts are not allowed to be technical peer reviewers unless there is inevitable situation which shall be approved by the EC. During the pandemic period, however, APMP exceptionally allows to use local technical experts for on-site technical peer reviews. This, however, requires approval by the EC, and will be restricted to cases where the scope of services under review (including calibration method, measuring range, and CMC of each service) is not changed from the last review.

- 1) Any planned review by local experts should be put forward by the Member to the relevant TC Chair by submitting the form entitled “Format for Technical Peer Approval” given in the APMP-QS2 document, and the detailed information on the scope of services to be reviewed.
- 2) TC Chair is to review the submitted information and then forward it to the EC Member liaising to TCs for approval. In case the TC Chair judges that using the local expert is inappropriate for the given review, the opinion of TC Chair may be forwarded to the EC Member for consideration, together with the reason of such judgment.

3) Utilizing local expert is to be approved by the EC only if candidate of reviewer satisfies the requirements given in the CIPM 2007-25 document<sup>[4]</sup>, and if the scope of services under review (including calibration method, measuring range, and CMC of each service) is not changed from the last review.

### **2.3 Recommendation for Members following pathway (c)**

It may be usual that a Member following pathway (c) conducts the review on QS and the technical competence at the same time. However, QS and technical competence may need to be reviewed separately in a pandemic period. This is because conducting the QS review may be possible even in the pandemic period, since in most cases of QS reviews, domestic QS experts are invited, and they may have less restriction for traveling. APMP's recommendation on the QS review and the review on technical competence for Members following pathway (c) are as below.

#### **2.3.1 QS review by a team consisting of quality system experts**

APMP recommends Members following pathway (c) to conduct the QS review before the 5-year deadline even during the pandemic period using the domestic QS experts. When this is not possible due to travel restriction or measures imposed by government, it is recommended to conduct a Remote Review. Details of these options are described below. Note that these options are listed in preferential order.

##### **A. Option 1-Review by Local Expert**

1) Any planned QS review by local experts should be put forward by the Member to the TCQS Chair asking for permission by submitting the form (given in the APMP-QS2 document) entitled "Format for Quality System Experts Approval".

2) TCQS Chair is to review the submitted information and then forward it to the EC Member liaising to TCs for approval. In case the TCQS Chair judges that using the local expert is inappropriate for the given review, his/her opinion may be forwarded to the EC Member for consideration, together with the reason of such judgment.

3) Criteria for selecting the local expert should conform to the CIPM 2007-25 document <sup>[4]</sup>.

### **B. Option 2-Remote Review**

1) During the pandemic period, if domestic QS experts are not allowed to travel or conduct onsite reviews, Members following pathway (c) are allowed to conduct a Remote QS Review, in which the review is taken through online video communication between the reviewer(s) and the Member under reviewing.

2) Reviewer(s) of a Remote Review may be domestic expert(s), but foreign expert(s) may also be used.

3) After searching for reviewer candidate(s), the Member wishing to run a Remote QS Review shall check and confirm that video communication between the Member and the reviewer candidate(s) is smooth enough to run a Remote Review, and confidentiality is maintained.

4) Any planned Remote QS Review should be put forward by the Member to the TCQS Chair asking for permission by submitting the form (given in the APMP-QS2 document) entitled “Format for Quality System Experts Approval”.

5) The TCQS Chair shall contact the reviewer candidate(s) and confirm the availability of the smooth video communication and confidentiality.

6) When the application is approved, all information necessary for the Review shall be sent to each reviewer at least one month ahead of the review so that the reviewer can have enough time to review the documents before the Remote Review.

7) The Member under review shall ensure that the reviewer(s) will be able to see every places he/she would see in a normal on-site peer review.

### **2.3.2 Review on technical competence by a team consisting of technical peers**

APMP decides that validity of the technical competence of APMP Members following pathway (c) is extended until six months after the pandemic is over. APMP recommends these Members to follow one of the 3 options listed in section 2.2.2 in preferential order.

**References:**

- [1] CIPM MRA (<https://www.bipm.org/en/cipm-mra/>)
- [2] “APMP Guidelines for Accepting a Quality System (APMP-QS2)”([http://apmpweb.org/liveproc/board/download.php?f\\_index=MTUy](http://apmpweb.org/liveproc/board/download.php?f_index=MTUy)).
- [3] “Guidelines for the monitoring and reporting of the operation of quality systems by RMOs (CIPM MRA-G-02)”, Charter 5 (<https://www.bipm.org/utis/common/documents/CIPM-MRA/CIPM-MRA-G-02.pdf>)
- [4] “Recommendations for on-site visits by peers and selection criteria for on-site visit peer reviewers (CIPM 2007-25)”([https://www.bipm.org/utis/common/documents/jerb/CIPM\\_2007\\_25\\_Onsite\\_visits\\_accepted.pdf](https://www.bipm.org/utis/common/documents/jerb/CIPM_2007_25_Onsite_visits_accepted.pdf))

**Abbreviations:**

- APMP: Asia Pacific Metrology Programme
- CIPM: International Committee for Weights and Measures
- CMC: Calibration and Measurement Capability
- COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019
- EC: Executive Committee
- IAF: International Accreditation Forum
- ILAC: International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
- ISO: International Organization for Standardization
- MRA: Mutual Recognition Arrangement
- NMI: National Metrology Institute
- QS: Quality System
- TC: Technical Committee
- TCQS: Technical Committee for Quality System

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