



MULTILATERAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT: STRUCTURE, SCOPE AND OBLIGATIONS

Issue Date: 14 May 2026
Implementation Date: 14 May 2026
Version No: 2.0

FURTHER INFORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 **Purpose:** This document outlines the scope and obligations of signatories to the Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (Global ACI) Arrangement (MRA) and serves as its policy statement.
- 1.2 **Scope:** This document applies to the governance framework of the Global ACI MRA, and it defines the applicability of policies to Global ACI MRA Signatories, which include Full Members and Regional Cooperation Bodies (RCBs) that have met the established requirements under Global ACI's Constitution and Bylaws.
- 1.3 The Global ACI MRA operates based on evaluations carried out in accordance with applicable international standards, rules, policies, and procedures, including those outlined in Global ACI recognised/endorsed normative documents. These evaluations ensure that accreditation bodies consistently implement accreditation requirements across all recognised fields.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Accreditation Body (AB)** - an authoritative body that provides accreditation (*Global ACI-GOV-001: Global ACI Constitution*).
- 2.2 **Global ACI Arrangement (Global ACI MRA)** - the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on the operation of accreditation that is signed by Full Members (*Global ACI-GOV-001: Global ACI Constitution*).
- 2.3 **Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)** - a body that performs Conformity Assessment Activities and that can be the object of accreditation (*ISO/IEC 17011:2017 clause 3.4*).
- 2.4 **Full Member** - an Accreditation Body that has been accepted by Global ACI as a signatory of the Global ACI Arrangement and meets the requirements and obligations for Associate Members as specified in the Bylaws.
- 2.5 **MRA Signatory** - A Full Member or a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body that has signed the Global ACI MRA and adheres to its requirements.
- 2.6 **Regional Cooperation Body** - a formally established regional cooperation of accreditation bodies that has met the Global ACI requirements for Regional Cooperation Bodies as set out in the Constitution and the Bylaws.

3. WHAT THE Global ACI MRA DELIVERS

- 3.1 The Global ACI MRA establishes a framework to facilitate the acceptance of the equivalence of accredited conformity assessment results. It enables trade facilitation, supports regulatory acceptance, and fosters trust in accredited activities globally by ensuring accredited conformity assessment bodies operate under internationally recognised criteria.
- 3.2 The Global ACI MRA provides:
 - a) A voluntary framework for the global acceptance of the equivalence of accredited conformity assessment results.
 - b) A framework for collaboration amongst members to facilitate recognition of conformity assessment results produced by conformity assessment bodies (CABs) accredited by signatories across the world.

- c) Confidence that accreditations granted by Global ACI MRA signatory accreditation bodies are equally reliable in ensuring the competence, impartiality, and consistent operation of accredited CABs.
- d) A foundational tool to support regulatory and market-based recognition programs, enhancing international confidence in accredited conformity assessment activities.

3.3 The Global ACI MRA cannot:

- a) Ensure identical treatment or automatic acceptance of conformity assessment results under all conditions.
- b) Override or replace other recognition mechanisms required by laws and regulations in the economies of its signatories.

4. Global ACI MRA – STRUCTURE

4.1 There are five levels in the Global ACI Global ACI MRA structure:

Level	Description	Explanation
Level 1		ISO/IEC 17011, which specifies the criteria for accreditation bodies, together with additional requirements that apply to accreditation body members, beyond those contained in ISO/IEC 17011 (Level 1).
Level 2	Global ACI MRA main scope	<p>Accreditation Activities, in which the Accreditation Body has demonstrated competence to perform accreditation as specified by the Global ACI, endorsed generic accreditation normative documents listed in Level 3.</p> <p>The accreditation activities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing, including medical • Calibration • Certification of management systems • Certification of persons • Certification of products, processes or services • Inspection • Validation and Verification • Proficiency Testing Provision • Reference Material Production • Biobanking
Level 3		<p>The generic normative documents used by the Accreditation Body to assess the competence of a Conformity Assessment Body for each activity in Level 2.</p> <p>The normative documents are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Testing: ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO 15189 • For Calibration: ISO/IEC 17025 • Certification of management systems: ISO/IEC 17021-1 • Certification of persons: ISO/IEC 17024 • Certification of product, processes or services: ISO/IEC 17065

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Inspection: ISO/IEC 17020 • For Validation and Verification: ISO/IEC 17029 • For Provision of Proficiency Testing: ISO/IEC 17043 • For Production of Reference Materials: ISO 17034 • For Biobanking: ISO 20387
Level 4	Sector-Specific Normative Documents	<p>Sector-specific normative documents which specify internationally recognised applications of a generic normative document listed in Level 3. The application documents are used by the Accreditation Body, in combination with the generic normative documents listed in Level 3, to assess the competence of a Conformity Assessment Body in the relevant sector.</p> <p>For certain normative documents at Level 3, additional endorsed documents, to be used alongside the Level 3 standard, are documented in <i>Global ACI-FMRA-001: Structure and Normative Documents under the Scope of Global ACI MRA</i>.</p>
Level 5		<p>Conformity assessment normative documents used by the CAB. It includes the scope of accreditation of the CAB or a Global ACI-endorsed conformity assessment normative document used by the accredited CABs.</p> <p>The endorsed documents for Level 5 are documented in <i>Global ACI-FMRA-001: Structure and Normative Documents under the Scope of Global ACI MRA</i>.</p>

- 4.2 The procedure for managing and extending the scope of the Global ACI MRA, including the addition of new accreditation activities or normative documents, is defined in *Global ACI MRA-003 Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Scope of the Arrangement*.
- 4.3 The full scope of the Global ACI MRA is documented in *Global ACI-FMRA-001: Structure and Normative Documents under the Scope of Global ACI MRA* and is published on the Global ACI website at www.global-aci.org. Global ACI-FMRA-001 does not require a separate membership ballot for publication, as corresponding decisions regarding the structure and scope of the Global ACI MRA are approved in advance by the Global ACI General Assembly under the procedures defined in this document.
- 4.4 The Global ACI Secretariat is responsible for maintaining and updating FMRA-001, after a final check by the Chair of the Arrangement Committee to confirm accuracy and completeness.
- 4.5 Global ACI is responsible for ensuring that Full members comply with the requirements of the Level 1 document. Each Full Member that is recognised for a particular Level 2 scope must ensure that its accredited CABs comply with the applicable requirements outlined in the relevant Level 3 and Level 4 documents.
- 4.6 The scope of accreditation as required by Level 5 is maintained by the Full Member for each of its accredited CABs.

5. Global ACI MRA – SCOPE

- 5.1 The parties to the Global ACI MRA are Global ACI Full Members and Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies that have signed the Global ACI MRA and adhere to its requirements.

These parties, collectively referred to as Global ACI MRA Signatories, operate within the framework of this Arrangement and commit to maintaining compliance with its policies, principles, obligations, and procedures.

6. POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

6.1. Multilateral Recognition and Equivalence

Signatories to the Global ACI MRA commit to recognising within their scope of recognition, the accreditations granted by other signatories as equivalent to those granted by their own accreditation body. This ensures confidence in the reliability of conformity assessment results. This multilateral recognition supports the reduction of technical barriers to trade, facilitates international acceptance of accredited results, and strengthens trust in accredited activities globally.

6.2. Conformity with International Standards

Signatories to the Global ACI MRA commit to complying with internationally recognised requirements and standards, promoting harmonised implementation of accreditation requirements across different sectors, and reinforcing global confidence in conformity assessment outcomes.

6.3. Transparency and Confidentiality

Signatories of the Global ACI MRA commit to operating transparently while ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive information. Transparency includes clear communication of Global ACI policies, peer evaluation results (where appropriate), and recognised MRA scopes.

Signatories of the Global ACI MRA shall uphold confidentiality regarding commercially sensitive, proprietary, or evaluation-related information, ensuring trust and impartiality in the Global ACI processes.

7. Global ACI MRA – OBLIGATIONS

7.1. General Obligations for all MRA Signatories

Each Global ACI MRA Signatory agrees to abide by the obligations, policies, and principles of this Arrangement, ensuring continued adherence to Global ACI requirements, peer evaluation obligations, and international standards as a condition of recognition under the Global ACI MRA.

Each Global ACI MRA Signatory shall:

- a) Recognise within its scope of recognition the accreditations granted by other signatories as equivalent to those granted by its own accreditation body, ensuring confidence in accredited conformity assessment results.

Note: Laws and regulations may have restrictions on the recognition of conformity assessment results as per Clause 7.9.

- b) Promote acceptance of accredited certificates and reports within the recognised scope of the Global ACI MRA, aligning with international best practices.

- c) Ensure that the role, benefits, scope, and limitations of the Global ACI MRA are clearly communicated to stakeholders, regulators, and market participants to promote awareness and prevent misinterpretation.
- d) Provide peer evaluators for the evaluations of Regional Cooperation Bodies.
- e) Maintain confidentiality regarding any sensitive information obtained through the peer evaluation process, accreditation activities, or other Global ACI related processes.

7.2. Obligations of Full Members:

Each Accreditation Body signatory to the Global ACI MRA shall:

- a) Maintain conformance with ISO/IEC 17011 and other relevant international standards applicable to its recognition scope.
- b) Adhere to Global ACI MRA policies, procedures, and normative documents, ensuring consistent implementation of Global ACI requirements.
- c) Ensure that all accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in accordance with applicable international standards and Global ACI requirements.
- d) Cooperate with other Accreditation Bodies to support the extension of the Global ACI MRA and maintain confidence in the multilateral recognition framework.

7.3. Obligations of a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body

Each Recognised Regional Cooperation Body to the Global ACI MRA shall:

- a) Maintain conformance with *Global ACI MRA-004: Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Regional Cooperation Body* and ensure its peer evaluation procedures comply with *Global ACI MRA-005: Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Single Accreditation Body*.
- b) Ensure that all Regional Cooperation Body signatories maintain conformance with ISO/IEC 17011 and other applicable international standards and normative documents.
- c) Ensure that peer evaluations of Accreditation Bodies, where those Accreditation Bodies are members of the Global ACI MRA, follow Global ACI-recognised policies and procedures, ensuring the integrity and consistency of accreditation practices.
- d) Facilitate cross-border cooperation among Accreditation Bodies in accordance with Global ACI policy.
- e) Investigate complaints or disputes arising from accreditation activities conducted within its region and support dispute resolution mechanisms within the Global ACI framework.
- f) Notify Global ACI within 30 days of any significant changes affecting its ability to meet the requirements for recognition.

7.4. Acceptance in the Global ACI MRA

- a) To apply to the Global ACI MRA, an Accreditation Body shall be an Associate member of Global ACI and be evaluated by a Recognised Regional Cooperation Body, in accordance with the relevant requirements and rules and procedures defined in *Global ACI MRA-005: Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Single Accreditation Body*.
- b) To apply to the Global ACI MRA a Regional Cooperation Body shall be evaluated by Global ACI, in accordance with the relevant requirements and rules and procedures defined in *Global ACI MRA-004: Requirements and Procedures for Evaluation of a Regional Cooperation Body*.
- c) Each accepted MRA Signatory shall complete a signature sheet authorised by the Global ACI Chair.
- d) The Global ACI MRA becomes effective upon signature by the MRA Signatory and the Chair of the Global ACI.

7.5. Modification of Scope of Recognition

The scope of recognition of a Global ACI MRA Signatory may be extended or reduced in accordance with the relevant rules, policies, and procedures. Requests for scope modifications must be submitted to Global ACI and shall follow the relevant procedures defined by Global ACI, which may include peer evaluation or other activities, before formal recognition. Any modification of the scope of recognition will be done according to *Global ACI MRA-002: Multilateral Recognition Arrangement: Management of the Global ACI MRA*.

7.6. Withdrawal from the Global ACI MRA

If an MRA Signatory wishes to withdraw from the Global ACI MRA or withdraw part of its scope of recognition for any reason, it shall notify Global ACI in writing. In the case of full withdrawal, the signatory shall be removed from the official list of Global ACI MRA signatories. In the case of partial withdrawal, the relevant scope shall be amended in the official list. The procedure is described in *Global ACI MRA-002 Multilateral Recognition Arrangement: Management of the Global ACI MRA*.

7.7. Disputes, Complaints and Appeals

Any dispute, complaint or appeal will be addressed according to *Global ACI-MS-004 Global ACI Procedures for Handling Disputes, Complaints and Appeals*.

7.8. Changes to the Text of the Global ACI MRA

Any amendment of the text of the Global ACI MRA shall be approved by the Global ACI General Assembly according to *Global ACI MS-005 Management of Documents*.

7.9. National or International Law and the Global ACI MRA

It is recognised and accepted by each of the MRA signatories that the Global ACI MRA does not create any rights, liabilities or obligations that would have a binding effect in domestic or international law. The Global ACI MRA by itself does not provide any recognition under any law or regulation in the economy of any signatory.

8. AMENDMENT TABLE

Section	Previous Version	Summary Of Changes
All	1.0	Changing Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated to Global ACI, including the new website and email address.

ANNEX 1 - Global ACI MRA SIGNATURE SHEET



Global ACI MULTILATERAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT

SIGNATORIES

We, the undersigned, endorse the terms of the Global ACI Arrangement and agree to abide by them to the best of our ability.

Full Member / Recognised Regional Cooperation Body:

Economy / Region:

Scope and date:

Authorised Representative:

Signature: _____ Date:

Chair, Global ACI Arrangement Committee:

Signature: _____ Date: