

MODULE 3

ACCREDITATION, MAINTENANCE AND REACCREDITATION PROCESSES

This document is an interim document that defines the accreditation procedure for AETBs seeking accreditation to ASTM D-7036:2004. This module will be superseded when the ASTM accreditation process standard is finalized.

The requirements elaborated in this document shall constitute clarifications to the requirements found in the final ASTM accreditation process standard. They may also include supplemental requirements deemed necessary by STAC to meet the requirements of this standard or ISO/IEC 17011. The requirements in this document should be kept to a minimum. If it is determined that additional requirements are needed, every effort should be made to modify the ASTM standard to make that the comprehensive source of requirements for AETBs.

3.1 INITIAL ACCREDITATION

AETBs wishing to obtain accreditation under any of the STAC Source Emission Measurement Quality Assurance Programs (SEMQAP) must successfully complete the accreditation process outlined in Figure 3-1. AETBs that fail to complete all of the requirements for interim accreditation within twelve (12) months from the date of receipt of the application by the STAC will have their application removed from consideration. Once an AETB has been notified that their application (or a portion thereof) has been removed from consideration, then the AETB must wait six (6) months before reapplying for accreditation. An additional application fee may be required when the AETB reapplies for accreditation. The Technical Assessment Board (TAB) shall arbitrate any timeline issues.

The accreditation process is summarized in the following steps:

- 3.1.1** A complete AETB application shall be submitted to the STAC with the associated, non-refundable fees. The STAC Technical Assessment Board (TAB) shall appoint a technical assessor (TA) to review and approve the application for completeness and conformance with ASTM 7036:2004.
- 3.1.2** The completed application shall be forwarded to a TA for review.
- 3.1.3** The TA shall issue a report to the AETB (with a copy to the TAB) outlining any findings.
- 3.1.3** The AETB shall address all of the findings and deficiencies identified by the TA with appropriate corrective actions.
- 3.1.4** Once the AETB has addressed the findings in the TA report to the satisfaction of the TA or after a reasonable time if the AETB does not address the findings, the TA shall submit a report to the TAB with recommendations on granting or denying interim accreditation.
- 3.1.5** The TAB shall vote to grant or deny AETB interim accreditation, taking into account the recommendation of the TA and all of the requirements for accreditation.
- 3.1.6** Once an AETB has been granted interim accreditation, they have twelve (12) months to schedule an on-site assessment with the TA.
- 3.1.7** The TA and AETB shall agree on an on-site assessor and the assessment shall be conducted.
- 3.1.8** The results of the on-site assessment as well as the test report must be delivered to the TA within 18 months of the determination of interim accreditation.

3.1.9 The TA shall issue a report to the AETB (with a copy to the TAB) outlining any findings.

3.1.10 The AETB shall address all of the findings and deficiencies identified by the TA with appropriate corrective actions.

3.1.11 Once the AETB has addressed the findings in the TA report to the satisfaction of the TA or after a reasonable time if the AETB does not address the findings, the TA shall submit a report to the TAB with recommendations on granting or denying full accreditation.

3.1.12 The TAB shall vote to grant or deny AETB full accreditation, taking into account the recommendation of the TA and all of the requirements for accreditation.

3.2 PROFICIENCY TESTING (PT)

Successful participation in applicable proficiency testing (PT) programs is required to qualify for accreditation. Consistent with their scope of accreditation, AETBs are required to analyze all proficiency testing samples as defined in STAC procedures. The AETB shall have a documented policy regarding participation in proficiency testing programs. Proficiency testing samples shall be analyzed in a manner similar to client samples. Results or analysis of proficiency samples shall not be discussed with other AETBs until the results have been publicly made available. The cost of proficiency testing programs shall be borne by the participating AETB.

3.3 APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

To apply for STAC accreditation under a single or multiple SEMQAP, a AETB shall complete an [SEMQAP Application](#) maintained on the STAC web site. Additional relevant information shall be provided to applicant AETBs upon request.

3.3.1 The completed SEMQAP Application, AETB Quality Assurance Manual, required performance data, and other required documentation shall be submitted to the STAC office, in accordance with SEMQAP application instructions, with the required fees.

3.3.2 The TA shall have ninety (90) days to complete the application review. The review includes a completeness check of the application, an evaluation of SEMQAP components to verify conformance, and verification of appropriate performance data.

3.3.3 If the application is incomplete, the TA shall work with the AETB to obtain the necessary information to continue with the application process. The AETB shall provide all required information within thirty (30) business days of the request. Failure to do so shall result in the loss of the application fee and the AETB shall be required to resubmit a completed application for consideration.

3.3.4 The application materials, used to prepare for the assessment, are the property of the STAC and shall be treated with appropriate confidentiality. If the AETB requests that any of the submitted materials be returned to the AETB, then the STAC shall make copies of the original materials and return the copies to the AETB. The original materials shall remain in STAC files as an official record.

3.4 TECHNICAL ASSESSOR REVIEW

The STAC SEMQAP staff shall forward one copy of the completed application and Quality Assurance Manual to the assigned TA for review. An AETB shall be notified in advance of the TA's identity and shall be permitted a rejection of the TA if it believes that a particular TA may represent a potential conflict of interest. The TA shall complete the application assessment within a period of 90 days from the time of receipt of the application from STAC, provided the TA is given access to all requested information from the AETB within a reasonable amount of time. If the AETB delays the process by failing to cooperate with the TA, then they shall have no basis for complaint to the STAC.

3.4.1 The TA shall complete a comprehensive technical review of the application. If the TA finds all components of the application to be in order, then the TA shall submit a recommendation to grant interim accreditation to the TAB..

3.4.2 If any critical deficiencies (e.g. lack of key personnel, no established quality system, inadequate facilities, improper equipment, etc.) are identified, the TA shall notify the AETB to discuss the issues to be resolved. If the AETB agrees to correct the critical deficiencies, documentation shall be submitted to substantiate the corrective action(s) taken to address the deficiency(s).

If the AETB chooses to stop the accreditation process by not addressing the critical deficiencies, then the TA shall return all AETB application materials to the STAC. The STAC shall send a letter to the AETB documenting the AETB decision to stop the process. The application fee shall be forfeited and the AETB shall be required to resubmit a completed application, in accordance with all SEMQAP requirements, for future consideration.

3.5 ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

A AETB on-site assessment is required for accreditation. STAC shall not delegate fully or partially the responsibility of an AETB assessment to another organization. The duration of the site assessment shall not exceed a maximum period of three (3) business days unless otherwise approved by the TAB and the AETB. The AETB shall bear all costs associated with the site assessment based upon a predetermined fee schedule. At the completion of the on-site assessment, the AETB shall be asked to complete a comment form. This feedback will be used to facilitate continuous improvement efforts at STAC and to evaluate the site assessor's performance.

3.5.1 The site assessor shall utilize a checklist, based on the ASTM D7036:2004 practice and STAC policy requirements, to evaluate the AETB during the on-site assessment portion of the accreditation process. The TAB shall approve the AETB on-site assessment checklist prior to use by the site assessor. Conformance with all checklist items is required for an AETB to be considered for accreditation.

3.5.2 Once the on-site assessment is complete, the site assessor shall submit the completed assessment checklist, with deficiencies and/or suggestions, to the AETB at the conclusion of the on-site assessment.

3.5.2.1 Deficiencies are problems or deficits (identified by the SEMQAP policy number) that must be corrected and proof of conformance provided. Deficiencies shall be addressed by mutually agreeable goal dates before the accreditation process can proceed.

3.5.2.2 Suggestions are recommended activities for improving AETB performance. The AETB shall address these issues with a response; however, suggestions do not require proof of conformance for accreditation.

3.5.3 The site assessor shall submit a final report (Site Assessment Report) and the completed checklist to the TA within ten (10) business days after completion of the on-site assessment.

3.5.4 The AETB shall respond in writing to all of the deficiencies and suggestions to the site assessor and TA within twenty (20) business days of completion of the on-site assessment. If the TA in consultation with the site assessor considers all of the AETB corrective actions appropriate and complete, then the TA shall provide an affirmative recommendation for AETB accreditation to the TAB.

3.5.5 If the AETB fails to respond to the site assessor and TA regarding deficiencies and suggestions within twenty (20) business days of completion of the on-site assessment, then STAC shall send a certified letter to the AETB informing them that they have ten (10) business

days from the date of the letter to respond to the deficiencies. Failure to respond by the deadline will terminate the accreditation process. The AETB shall be responsible for the site assessor fees, and the application fees shall be forfeited.

3.5.6 If the AETB responses to the deficiencies and suggestions are unacceptable to the site assessor or TA, he/she shall notify the AETB within ten (10) business days of receiving the responses. The TA shall specify what additional information and/or actions are required to adequately address the deficiencies and suggestions. The AETB shall be given twenty (20) business days to respond to this request for additional information. Failure to submit the required information to the site assessor within the specified time period shall result in the termination of the accreditation process. The AETB shall be responsible for the site assessor fees, and the application fees shall be forfeited.

3.5.7 If the AETB responses to the deficiencies continue to be unacceptable to the TA or site assessor and there is insufficient time to complete the accreditation process within the ninety (90) month time frame; or if there are irresolvable differences of opinion between the AETB and the TA, then the TA shall recommend to the TAB that the AETB be denied accreditation. If the TAB concurs with this recommendation to deny accreditation, then all AETB records related to the accreditation process are submitted to the STAC Board of Directors for review and evaluation.

3.6 GRANTING OF ACCREDITATION

The STAC Technical Assessment Board (TAB) has the authority to approve AETBs for accreditation. If an AETB meets all accreditation program requirements, successfully completing each review step of the accreditation process, then the AETB shall be placed on a TAB ballot. The TAB shall vote, in accordance with Module 1, Section 1.2.1, to grant or deny AETB accreditation. AETB accreditation shall be granted for a period of five (5) years. All TAB decisions may be appealed to the STAC Board of Directors. The appeals process is discussed in Module 5.

3.7 RESERVED

3.8 MAINTENANCE OF ACCREDITATION

AETB accreditation shall be maintained by continued conformance with SEMQAP requirements, continued successful participation in the appropriate proficiency testing programs, submission of the annual update, and payment of appropriate fees.

3.8.1 Reporting of Significant Changes

Any changes in AETB ownership, management, or any other change that significantly affects the AETB's capability or ability to meet the policy requirements, shall be reported in writing to the STAC within twenty (20) business days of the change. Any absence of personnel for a period in excess of twenty (20) consecutive working days, that impacts the AETB's ability to perform its scope of testing, shall be reported to the STAC within twenty (20) business days. This notification requirement shall be in effect if the Technical Manager, the Quality Manager, or a Qualified Individual who is the only staff member that performs a given test, are absent for reasons of extended family leave, illness, temporary disability, etc.

The STAC shall submit the notification of significant change(s) to the TAB for evaluation, review and approval. The STAC shall notify the AETB of the results of the evaluation and shall amend the record, in accordance with the TAB approved change(s), within twenty (20) business days. During the period between AETB change notification submittal and STAC's formal acceptance of the changes, the TAB may elect to suspend the AETB's accreditation status until the changes are assessed and determined to be in conformance with the policy requirements. An additional AETB assessment may be required for facility or procedural modifications. Ownership changes

shall be evaluated in consideration of proposed management changes. Significant changes in ownership shall require the AETB to reapply under a new accreditation number.

3.8.2 Annual Update

The STAC shall send a request for updated information to each accredited AETB during the first quarter of each calendar year. The update shall require verification of personnel (management and staff), approved signatories, scope of services provided, and any other information as deemed necessary by the STAC. The AETB shall have twenty (20) business days to verify the information, complete the update, and return the form to the STAC. STAC shall report significant changes to the TAB who shall determine if any action is necessary based on the requirements as set forth in Section 3.8.1.

3.8.3 Maintenance of Proficiency

Accredited AETBs shall maintain proficiency for all applicable Test Methods or Method Groups as defined in STAC procedures. If a AETB becomes non-proficient in a specific Test Method or Method Group, based on PT sample performance, and there is no PT retest sample available, then its accredited status for the Test Method or Method Group in question shall be suspended immediately.

If the AETB becomes non-proficient in a specific Test Method or Method Group(s), based on PT sample performance, and there is a PT retest sample available, then the AETB may choose to purchase the retest PT sample to attempt to regain a proficient status immediately, thereby maintaining a fully accredited status for the applicable Test Method or Method Group(s). If the AETB does not opt to purchase a Test Method or Method Group-specific, round-specific PT retest sample within the required time frame, then its accredited status for the Test Method or Method Group(s) in question shall be suspended immediately. The PT sample retest results shall replace the original results submitted by the AETB and Test Method or Method Group proficiency shall be reevaluated based upon the PT retest results. PT retest samples may be used only to regain a proficient status (i.e., cannot be used to achieve an initial proficient status on an accelerated basis).

3.8.4 Maintenance of Fees

If the AETB fails to pay the SEMQAP fees assessed by the STAC in an invoice, then the STAC reserves the right to suspend the AETB's accreditation(s) for any or all Test Method or Method Groups until all fees are paid in full. STAC shall notify the participant of this action in writing, specifying a payment deadline. If payment is not received by STAC within the specified time frame and a written request from the AETB to extend the payment deadline has not been received and approved by the STAC Finance Department, then the STAC shall administratively remove the AETB from the program(s).

3.8.5 Notice of Intended Change

STAC shall notify the AETB of intended changes relating to the requirements of this document and other referenced documents. STAC shall ensure that the AETB carries out the necessary adjustments to its procedures within such time, as in the opinion of the STAC is reasonable. The AETB shall notify the STAC when such adjustments have been made.

3.9 ADDITION OF A TEST METHOD OR METHOD GROUP

An accredited AETB that wishes to add a new Test Method or Method Group shall enroll in the appropriate proficiency testing program (if available) and establish proficiency for the Test Method or Method Group. The AETB shall submit an updated application that includes information associated with the addition of the new Test Method or Method Group, such as expanded staff qualifications, and any additions/modifications to the AETB equipment and facility. The application shall be reviewed by a TA who shall make a recommendation to the TAB regarding accreditation for the new Test Method or Method Group within ten (10) business days of receiving the application. The AETB may be required to undergo an additional on-site assessment before expansion of the accreditation is finalized. The TAB shall vote on the TA recommendation on the next scheduled ballot, see Section 3.7, Granting of Accreditation.

3.10 REQUIREMENTS FOR REACCREDITATION

AETB accreditation shall be granted for a period of five (5) years. AETBs must reaccredit every five (5) years by completing an application that conforms to all SEMQAP requirements, and successfully completing an on-site assessment (see Accreditation Process, Figure 3-1). The AETB shall also demonstrate continued, successful participation in the appropriate proficiency testing program(s) and demonstrate continued quality improvement through its performance data. If an AETB chooses not to seek reaccreditation, then the AETB accreditation(s) shall expire on the accreditation expiration date as shown on the certificate of accreditation issued by STAC. Additionally, the AETB shall notify STAC, in writing, of its intentions not to seek reaccreditation, in lieu of submitting an application for consideration of reaccreditation (see Section 3.10.1).

3.10.1 Reapplication

The reaccreditation process shall begin with the AETB completing the SEMQAP Application. Nine (9) months prior to the expiration of the existing accreditation(s), the STAC shall notify the AETB, in writing, requesting that the AETB obtain, complete and submit an application for reaccreditation. The AETB must complete and return this application within thirty (30) business days from the date of notification. The reaccreditation application process is similar to the process defined in Sections 3.1 and 3.3 except that the process must be completed before the expiration date of the current accreditation(s) and failure to submit a complete application may result in suspension of accreditation(s).

AETBs shall undergo reaccreditation for all Test Method or Method Groups (all accreditation programs), at the same time, regardless of the date of initial accreditation for each program Test Method or Method Group. For instance, if the AETB sought and received accreditation of an additional Test Method or Method Group since the last full (re)accreditation cycle, the additional Test Method or Method Group shall be evaluated as part of the current application.

The AETB may request from STAC, in writing, an extension of time for submitting the reaccreditation application or for providing notification to STAC regarding reaccreditation intentions (see Section 3.10).

3.10.2 On-Site Assessment

The reaccreditation process shall require an on-site assessment that shall follow the same process as that described in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

In addition to the on-site assessment that is completed at least twice during the five (5) year term of accreditation, unannounced assessments may be authorized by the TAB to investigate potential problems with an accredited AETB. In the event of an unannounced assessment, the AETB shall not be charged for the on-site assessment. Refusal to allow an unannounced AETB assessment may be grounds for revocation.

In rare cases, the TAB, with input from a site assessor or TA, may require a follow-up, surveillance assessment to verify resolution of major deficiencies as identified in the on-site assessment performed as part of the (re)accreditation process. In this instance, AETBs shall be notified at the time of the (re)accreditation process on-site assessment of the requirement for a subsequent announced or unannounced surveillance assessment. AETBs shall bear the cost of a required surveillance assessment.

3.10.3 RESERVED

3.10.4 Granting of Accreditation

Reaccreditation shall be voted upon by the TAB as defined in Section 3.7.

FIGURE 3-1 ACCREDITATION PROCESS

