

Summary of Onsite Assessment Committee Meeting August 11, 2008

1. Roll call and agenda overview

Denise Rice, Chair of the Onsite Assessment Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:15 AM on Monday, August 11, 2008, in Washington, DC. Committee members present included Ms. Rice, Don Cassano, Nilda Cox, and Margo Hunt.

Ms. Rice reviewed the agenda for this meeting:

- Comparison of NELAC standard and TNI standard
- Technical course curriculum overview and comments
- Basic Assessor course curriculum
- Accomplishments since Newport
- Guidance documents for laboratories
- Survey for assessors

2. TNI Standards Then and Now

Don Cassano presented an overview comparison of the new TNI standards to the 2003 NELAC standards. Mr. Cassano stressed that his presentation emphasized the “approach” and not the specific detail of the standards. He indicated that 80% of the old standard was still in the new standard. The new standard is a consensus standard and is in a more user friendly format. The new standard is based on ISO 17011 with added specificity for environmental testing and lab accreditation. The training requirements for basic assessor training and technical training remain, but the specifics have been removed from the standard, and will be included in guidance. The final standards with ISO references are available on the TNI website for free, and the standards with ISO language included may be purchased from TNI.

The OSA committee is developing a guidance document for labs that will highlight what labs need to know that is not in the new standard.

3. Technical Course Curriculum Overview

Ms. Rice reviewed the revised suggested technical course curriculum guidance document for assessors. Ms. Rice stated that the purpose of the training was to make assessors out of analysts, and the course curriculum assumes a certain level of background knowledge. The outlines as presented reflected the committee’s action on comments received in Cambridge and from on-line posting. The revised training outlines will be posted for comment on the TNI website in September prior to finalizing. The course outlines reviewed included:

- Asbestos
- Inorganic non-metals

- Metals
- Microbiology
- Organic chemistry
- Radiochemistry
- Toxicity

With regard to the Microbiology outline, Jack Farrell asked if photographs could be used in place of actual plate examples. He cited the difficulty of travel with bacterial cultures. Ms. Rice responded that the committee will take this under advisement.

Marlene Moore asked if the accreditation bodies (AB) had discussed the cost of training and how to implement the refresher requirements. She suggested that guidance to the ABs is needed.

Ms. Rice then presented the technical course examination guidance. She stated that the purpose of the guidance is to assess technical knowledge and assessment skills. The suggested guidance states that the exam should include 40-60 questions that are multiple choice, true-false, and fill in the blank, with no more than 20% T-F. The exam should include questions on calculations and improper practices. 70% is passing for the exam. The guidance also includes a list of exam topics for each discipline.

Marilyn Maycock asked how we assure that assessors have the background technical knowledge to assess particular areas. Ms. Rice responded that the intent of the training and exams is to bring out whether or not the assessor has the appropriate background knowledge.

Jim Brodderick pointed out that the Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee has posted a standards interpretation request form on the TNI website.

4. Basic Assessor Curriculum Overview

Ms. Rice explained that this draft document replaces Appendix A in the 2003 NELAC standards. The purpose of basic assessor training is to ensure consistency and this guidance does not include any provisions for “testing out”. The delivery format is not specified. It is left up to the instructor. ABs are responsible for ensuring that their assessors are trained. The recommended course content includes:

1. History of TNI and the standards development process
2. Fundamental structure of TNI and ISO
3. V2M1 AB General Requirements
4. V2M2 AB Requirements re: PTs
5. V2M3 Onsite Assessments
6. V1M1 Proficiency Testing

7. V1M2 Quality Systems Requirements
8. V1M3 Quality Systems Technical Disciplines (not in great detail)
9. V3 PT provider requirements

Jack Farrell suggested that Item 9 (PT providers) could also be a sub-section of Item # 4 or 6.

Ms. Rice asked the audience for comment on the prescriptiveness of the training. She noted that there was some good language in the old appendix A, but some is overly prescriptive.

Mr. Farrell suggested that the function of primary and secondary ABs should be included in the training. He also stated there should be emphasis on what does the standard say, how do you evaluate to the standard and what documents you review to verify compliance.

Carol Batterton suggested that Items 1 and 2 should be uniform and perhaps could be provided through slides from TNI (Jerry Parr) that already exist.

Lynn Bradley noted that consistency is always a big issue and that argues for a more prescriptive outline.

Ms. Bradley suggested that another approach would be for the committee to design the exam and let the instructors teach the course to cover the exam topics. Ms. Rice noted that the committee had previously received a suggestion to provide a database of exam questions. Mr. Cassano expressed concern with responsibility for exam security and integrity if the committee maintained the exam questions. Marlene Moore stated that if vendors design the exams, there needs to be oversight for vendors.

Paul Bergeron of LDEQ asked what to do about in-house training of assessors. Ms. Rice responded that is acceptable since ultimately the ABs determine if their assessors have met the training requirements of the standard. These outlines could be used to help them develop their course.

There was also a comment about who trains the trainers.

5. Ms. Rice announced the retirement of Margo Hunt and Betsy Ziomek. She thanked them for their efforts and participation on the committee. Ms. Rice announced that because of the retiring members, that four committee positions would be available and that if anyone was interested, to send in their application.
6. The meeting adjourned around noon.