



MLA COMMITTEE AND MLA GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

CLASSIFICATION

This document is classified as an ARAC Administrative Document.

AUTHORIZATION

Issue N°: 03
Prepared by: MLA Committee
Date: May 2016
Revision N°: 01
Approved by: ARAC GA
Issue Date: May, 2016
Application Date: Immediate
Document number: ARAC AD 021

Inquiries: ARAC Secretariat
e-mail: secretariat@arabarac.org

AVAILABILITY

Copies of this document in Arabic and English are available at the ARAC Secretariat and on the ARAC website.

COPYRIGHT

ARAC holds the copyright of this document and it may not be copied for resale.

Original: English

MLA COMMITTEE AND MLA GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Objective

- a) The objectives of the MLA Committee (MLAC) are to plan and manage the implementation and maintenance of ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA). The objective of the MLA Group (MLAG) is to decide on and manage membership in the ARAC Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA).

- b) This document specifies the functions, composition, quorum and responsibilities of the MLA Committee and MLA Group.

2. Functions of the MLA Committee (MLAC)

Improvement and Operational Documents:

- a) Implement and maintain policies and operational procedures of the ARAC MLA;
- b) Identify specific needs for development and continual improvement of ARAC MLA;
- c) Create and dissolve ad-hoc groups as needed for the development of specific tasks in a predetermined timeframe, and monitor their progress;
- d) Identify concerns of customers or stakeholders about acceptance and relevance of the MLA and seek solutions.

Managing Resources:

- e) Establish the criteria to qualify peer evaluators and lead peer evaluators;
- f) Keep an updated registry of peer evaluators, for participation in ARAC MLA peer evaluation process;
- g) Propose and develop training activities for peer evaluators (workshops, courses, seminars, etc.), in order to harmonize the application of criteria;
- h) Manage the performance evaluation process of the peer evaluators. In order to do this, the ARAC MLA Committee Chair shall appoint an Evaluators Working Group (EWG) to manage and oversee all issues related to peer evaluators. This EWG shall consist of at least three persons who have either experience in MLA decision making or are qualified as lead evaluators;
- i) Plan and monitor peer evaluation processes;

Managing MLA issues:

- j) Liaise with management committees of other international and regional MLAs (e.g., ILAC, IAF, AFRAC, IAAC, APLAC, PAC, EA).
- k) Keep the ARAC Secretariat informed about the MLAC's activities, including MLAG minutes and resolutions, MLAC resolutions, attendance list or other activities; and
- l) To follow up on the participation of the ARAC MLA signatories members in the ARAC organized PT programs.

3. Composition of the MLA Committee

- a) The MLAC shall have a Chair elected by the General Assembly in accordance with the Bylaws, for a term of two years, and can be reelected once. In any case, the incumbent may serve for a maximum of four consecutive years.
- b) The MLAC shall have a Vice Chair elected by the committee members, for a term of two years, and can be reelected once.
- c) The MLAC shall have an MLA Secretary, who may be the ARAC Secretary.
- d) The MLAC will be integrated by one representative of each full member, two representatives of the associate members, one representative of the Stakeholders and one representative of the affiliate members.

Note: All associate, Stakeholder and affiliate members may participate in the meetings of the MLAC as observers.

- e) The representatives of ARAC full members, associate members, stakeholders members and affiliate members shall be nominated by their entities to the Chair of the MLAC.
- f) The representatives of ARAC full and associate members have a voice and vote. The representatives of affiliate and stakeholders members only have a voice.
- g) A single vote is considered for each signatory, not for each country.
- h) The quorum of the MLA Committee shall be achieved in a meeting when at least 80% of the full and associate members are present in person or by proxy, and for electronic ballots when at least 80 % of the full and associate members issue a vote.
- i) Decisions by the MLA Committee will be made preferably by consensus. If

consensus is not achieved, decisions shall be made by an affirmative vote of at least two thirds of quorum (abstentions will not be considered). Decision may be made either in meetings or by e-mail/postal ballot.

- j) Invitations to other organizations to participate as observers can be made by the Chair of the MLAC.

4. ARAC MLA Group

4.1. Functions of the MLA Group (MLAG)

- a) To make decisions on the acceptance of applications to the ARAC MLA.
- b) To make decisions on the need for a preliminary visit
- c) To make decisions regarding the status of membership to the ARAC MLA, including granting, maintenance, suspension and withdrawal from the MLA.
- d) To review evaluation report findings to confirm that they are correctly classified and that the report contains the necessary information to have full confidence that the Accreditation Body (AB) complies with MLA requirements.
- e) To review changes notified by signatories that affect the MLA and to decide on subsequent actions.
- f) To oversee implementation of ARAC, ILAC and IAF resolutions relevant to the MLA.

4.2. Composition of the ARAC MLA Group

- a) The Chair and the Vice Chair of the MLAC are the Chair and Vice Chair of the MLAG.
- b) The MLAG shall have a Secretary who may be the MLAC Secretary.
- c) The MLAG will be integrated by one representative of each signatory to the ARAC MLA. Each representative may be accompanied by a deputy.

Note: All full members that are not signatories to the ARAC MLA and all associate members may participate in the meetings of the MLAG as observers.

- d) The representatives and their deputies (who is to vote instead of the representative when he/she is involved in the evaluation) shall be nominated by their entities to the Chair of the MLAC.
- e) Each signatory has a voice and vote.
- f) A single vote is considered for each signatory, not for each country.
- g) The quorum of the MLA Group shall be achieved in a meeting when at least 80% of the ARAC MLA signatories are present in person or by proxy, and for electronic ballots when 80% of the MLA signatories issue the vote.
- h) Decisions of the MLA Group will be made preferably by consensus. If consensus is not achieved decisions shall be made by an affirmative vote of two thirds of

- quorum (abstentions will not be considered). Decision may be made either in meetings or by e-mail/postal ballot.
- i) Invitations to other organizations to participate as observers can be made by the Chair of the MLA Group.
 - j) Observers from ARAC full and associate members that attend an MLAG meeting may request permission to the MLA Group to receive minutes of the MLA Group meeting that they have observed.
 - k) The evaluation team leader and evaluation team members may be invited to participate as observers in MLAG meetings where the report of a peer evaluation they have performed is discussed. During the meetings they may observe the MLA Group's discussion and decision making and will respond to MLA Group's questions, provide clarifications and any information that may help the MLAG in the decision making process. If a member of the MLAG is from the AB which is subject to the MLAG decision, then he/she will not participate. If a member of MLAG has participated in a peer evaluation, he/she shall abstain from voting in the relevant decision and his/her deputy may issue the vote. When a deputy is not nominated or not present, the representative of the MLA signatory that has participated in a peer evaluation is entitled to cast an abstention vote.

4.3. Selection Criteria of the ARAC MLA Group members

The nominated ARAC MLA Group members and their deputies shall fulfill the following criteria:

- a) Have an understanding of what should be in a report from a generic and specific perspective.
- b) Have collective expertise at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the IAF MLA and the ILAC Arrangement.
- c) Understand; the planning and conduct of the evaluation, its breadth and depth, the findings and their classification, and the adequacy of the conclusions, and recommendations.
- d) With experience as an AB assessor, and exposure to the A series documents, IAF MLA P&P, ILAC P-Series as well as practical experience in the peer evaluation process.

Note: in addition to the above criteria, the MLA G Chair shall have a good communication skills and an understanding of the criteria and process. At least one of the ARAC MLA Group members shall be qualified as a peer evaluator.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. The Chair's responsibilities are:

- a) Carry out these Terms of Reference

- b) Chair meetings of the MLAC and the MLA Group;
- c) Appoint team leader and team members for peer evaluations;
- d) Submit to the MLA Group peer evaluation reports and all other matters that requires their decision;
- e) Report to the General Assembly and Executive Committee about the work that is being carried out in the MLAC;
- f) Submit to the General Assembly for ratification, all the resolutions adopted by the MLA Committee;
- g) Inform the ARAC General Assembly of new signatories and their scopes of recognition and other decisions related to maintenance, suspension or withdrawal from the MLA; and
- h) Maintain the Vice-Chair informed on all of the current and planned activities.

5.2. The Vice-Chair's responsibilities are:

- a) Assist the Chair in the fulfillment of his/her duties;
- b) Replace the Chair in his/her absence or impediment; and
- c) Maintain permanent contact with the Chair in order to be aware of the current and planned activities, and assist the Chair in carrying them out.

5.3. The MLAC Secretary's responsibilities are:

- a) Assist the Chair in the fulfillment of his/her duties; and
- b) Draft meeting resolutions and distribute them to the MLAC and MLA Group members, respectively
- c) Distribute to MLAC members the working papers for committee meetings.
- d) Distribute to MLA Group members the evaluation reports which require MLAG decisions as well as other MLAG working papers
- e) Maintain the peer evaluator registry and peer evaluation records.
- f) Maintain and publish the list of MLA Signatories;
- g) Submit an annual ARAC MLA report for the IAF MLA MC and to the ILAC AMC.

5.4. The MLAC members' responsibilities are:

- a) Attend MLAC meetings and actively participate in the specialized working groups formed to carry out the Committee tasks;
- b) Develop initiatives to assist the accomplishment of the MLA Committee's goals;
- c) Perform in a timely manner, the tasks and responsibilities assigned individually or as a part of a working group;
- d) Monitor the performance of peer evaluators.

5.5. The MLA Group members' responsibilities are:

- a) To ensure that it appoints a representative and deputy to the MLA Group that are fulfill the selection criteria of the ARAC MLA Group members;
- b) Vote in MLA Group decisions.

5.6. The representative of the MLAG member shall

- a) Attend the MLAG meetings and participate in the MLAG discussions
- b) Review evaluation report findings to confirm that they are correctly classified and that the report contains the necessary information to have full confidence that the AB complies with MLA requirements
- c) Review and participate in decisions on peer evaluation reports, applications for recognitions, recommendations for preliminary visits, and other decisions related to signatory status.

6. **MEETINGS**

6.1. The MLAC and MLAG shall meet when considered necessary by the Chair, by the ARAC General Assembly, or by at least two third of its members.

6.2. The MLAC and the MLAG shall meet at least once a year.

6.3. Draft agendas shall be distributed at least four weeks before each meeting.

6.4. Draft MLAC resolutions and MLAG minutes and resolutions shall be distributed within two months of the meeting.

6.5. MLAC meeting documents shall be distributed at least two weeks prior to each meeting.

6.6. Peer Evaluation reports which require MLAG decisions shall be distributed to MLAG members at least 15 days before the meetings.

6.7. MLAG documents are confidential. MLAG members representatives to the MLAG and their deputies shall sign the ARAC Declaration of Confidentiality and Impartiality, FM 011, just once before they are given access to the first Peer evaluation report. The declaration remains valid throughout the entire MLAG process. Observers in the meetings of the MLAG shall sign the ARAC Declaration of Confidentiality and Impartiality FM 011 at the beginning of each meeting.

Observers in the meeting of the MLAG may be given access to evaluations reports before the meeting, provided that they sign FM 011 before being given access.