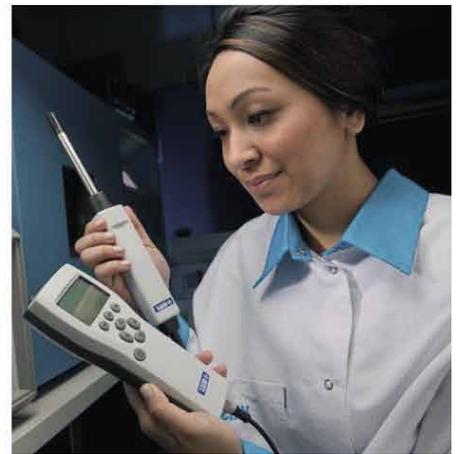


Accredited or Certified? Answers to the Seven Most Frequently Asked Questions about Accreditation



1. What is laboratory accreditation?

Accreditation is formal third-party recognition by an authoritative body of a laboratory's competence, both to work to specified standards and to carry out specific tasks that are defined in the scope of the accreditation. The laboratory's management and quality systems are assessed during the accreditation process, as is the laboratory's technical competence to carry out the specific tasks.

The main standard used for accrediting calibration and testing laboratories globally is ISO/IEC 17025: General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.

2. What is the difference between accreditation and certification?

Although the terms accreditation and certification are sometimes

used interchangeably and both terms address the issue of quality management systems, they are not synonymous.

Accreditation is formal third-party recognition by an authoritative body, verifying that a laboratory has an acceptable quality management system in place and can properly perform tasks according to the accreditation scope.

Certification is written assurance by a third party that a product, management system or personnel conforms to specified requirements.

3. Who are the accreditation bodies?

There are many accreditation bodies providing accreditation services worldwide. Accreditation bodies are usually either members of multilateral recognition agreements or have mutual recognition arrangements signed by international organizations, such

as the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the International Accreditation Forum Inc. (IAF), and the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA). Accredited laboratories may use these arrangements to reduce the need to get accredited in multiple countries.

4. How is accreditation achieved and maintained?

Accreditation is achieved after an audit of the laboratory's quality and management systems by an individual or team of assessors. The assessor(s), typically experts in the calibration industry or representatives of national laboratories, also ensure that the laboratory is technically competent to carry out the measurements included in the accreditation scope. To maintain accreditation, laboratories are periodically re-evaluated by the accreditation body

to ensure their continued compliance with requirements, and to check that their standard of operation is being maintained.

5. What is the difference between traceable and accredited calibration?

Traceable means that the result of a measurement can be related to stated references of either national or international standards, through an unbroken chain of comparisons.

An accredited calibration service provider is one that has been approved by an accreditation body. During the accreditation process, the laboratory needs to prove the traceability of their measurements to a national or international standard.

6. Who needs accredited calibrations?

Accredited calibration is typically required when formal third-party recognition is expected, for example when instruments are used as reference standards, or to meet various demands from different authorities.

Accreditation provides the customer with an assurance of high-quality service, as the laboratory has been assessed to be technically competent to conduct their tasks by an external assessor.

7. Who provides accredited calibration services?

There are accredited laboratories all over the world. Vaisala has five

accredited laboratories for specific instrument calibrations that are recognized by all major international accreditation organizations.

Customers all over the world are served from the following locations:

- Helsinki, Finland
- Tokyo, Japan
- Boston, United States
- Vancouver, Canada
- São Paulo, Brazil

Read more about the calibration services offered at Vaisala Service Centers here:

www.vaisala.com/calibration.

History of Accredited Laboratories at Vaisala

Vaisala has a long history of systematically improving its measurement and calibration systems. Even in the company's early years, its self-made production equipment and related measurement technologies were externally verified.

In 1978, Vaisala's CEO Yrjö Toivola realized the benefit of gathering all the acquired references together. The major investment resulted in the foundation of the Measurement Standards Laboratory in Helsinki, Finland. This cutting-edge laboratory received accreditation in 1983

– one of the first laboratories in Finland to apply for third-party recognition following the creation of the laboratory authorization system.

The Measurement Standards Laboratory has played a significant role in Vaisala's success. Since its foundation, it has helped maintain and improve the traceability and accuracy of Vaisala products. It has also created unique opportunities to develop highly accurate and reliable measurement products and systems that are now at the core of Vaisala's offering.

In 2001, Vaisala introduced accredited calibration services for selected humidity, temperature, and pressure products. The offering has since been expanded with additional dew point parameter, and the business has grown to cover five accredited laboratories around the world. Customers requiring products with accredited calibrations and accredited calibration services are scattered across a wide variety of industries, but they have a common requirement to follow strict quality policies. Vaisala is proud to support this need.

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Please contact us at
www.vaisala.com/requestinfo



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