



Procedure to Termination, Suspension and Withdrawal of ISTA Accreditation

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1. SCOPE

- 1.1 This document forms part of the conditions of laboratories, laboratories with facilities at multiple sites, laboratories and sampling entities with sampling units at multiple sites, and sampling entities accreditation under the ISTA Accreditation Standard for Seed Sampling and Testing. For the purpose of this Directive, the term ISTA “accredited member” refers to an accredited laboratory, laboratories with facilities at multiple sites, laboratories and sampling entities with sampling units at multiple sites, and accredited sampling entity.
- 1.2 ISTA accreditation can either be voluntarily terminated or suspended by the accredited member or suspended or withdrawn by ISTA for specified reasons. Withdrawal normally follows a suspension.
- 1.3 Termination, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation may be applied to all or only one or more specific sampling and/or test methods or crop groups included in the accredited member’s scope of accreditation. Due to the requirements of the ISTA Rules, termination, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation for a test will automatically include a termination, suspension or withdrawal of accreditation for all test methods which require the use of that test. In such cases the ISTA Accreditation and Technical Department will notify the laboratory as to which other tests are involved.
- 1.4 Any recommendation for suspension of, withdrawal from or reinstatement of accreditation must be formally agreed upon case by case by the ISTA Executive Committee - Accreditation Working group (ECOM-AWG) or by the full ISTA Executive Committee (ECOM).

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS

ISTA Accreditation Standard for Seed Sampling and Testing

Acc-D-06A: Accreditation of laboratories with facilities at multiple sites

Acc-D-06B: Accreditation of laboratories and sampling entities with sampling units at multiple sites

PT-P-01: ISTA Standard Proficiency Test Programme

Admin-P-05: Appeals and Complaints Procedure

Acc-D-02: Use of ISTA Logo Policy

3. TERMINATION

3.1 Definition

Termination of accreditation means that a member is no longer accredited after voluntary termination or because the accreditation period has ended without an application for re-accreditation.

3.2 Voluntary termination

An accredited member may voluntarily terminate its accreditation for all or for parts of its scope of accreditation, at any time within the period of validity of the Certificate of Accreditation, by giving written notice to the ISTA Accreditation and Technical Department. A voluntary termination will invalidate the Certificate of Accreditation. A partial termination will lead to the issuance of a new Certificate of Accreditation for that part of the scope of accreditation, which was not terminated, with an unchanged period of validity.

Termination of the entire accreditation within the period of accreditation implies:

- the return of any unused ISTA Certificates; the merit of returned ISTA Certificates can not be reimbursed as they must not be reused for further sales.
- the removal from the list of accredited members.

4. SUSPENSION

4.1 Definition

Suspension of accreditation means a temporary ban for a defined period of time preventing the member from making use of the entire or parts of the ISTA Accreditation. This means that the member loses the privileges of the entire or parts of the ISTA Accreditation.

A laboratory may lose the privileges of parts of the ISTA Accreditation if the suspension was due to proficiency test performances below the minimum standard (BMP) but not for all of the accredited tests of the laboratory (see 4.4). In this case the laboratory must not issue ISTA Certificates for the corresponding test; this also includes associated tests. Suspension of this part will:

- result in a change of the Scope of Accreditation, removing the tests for which the laboratory did not show its competency. Tests associated with the suspended ones will also be removed.

A member may lose the privileges of the entire ISTA Accreditation. In this case it may not identify itself as an ISTA accredited member in letters and reports and cannot sample for the issuance of ISTA Certificates and issue ISTA Certificates. Suspension of accreditation will:

- not relieve the accredited member of its obligations towards ISTA incurred during the accreditation period (e.g. paying fees, informing about changes that affect accreditation).
- will be removed from the list of ISTA accredited members
- not affect the period of validity of the Certificate of Accreditation.

The aim of the suspension is to allow the accredited member to act in order to avoid the withdrawal of its accreditation.

4.2 Voluntary suspension

The accredited member may request suspension as a voluntary step when exceptional circumstances temporarily prevent the member from complying with the accreditation criteria, but where a future return to normal circumstances can be expected. The period of suspension must be defined by the accredited member when the request is made. As a rule, the maximum period of suspension in such a case should not exceed 6 months.

It is up to the laboratory whether or not it takes part in the proficiency test programme during the voluntary suspension. The ECOM-AWG is informed.

The ECOM-AWG may approve an extension of more than 6 months period, considering an approved recovery plan with for example Proficiency Tests results, interlaboratory comparative tests, or an ISTA extraordinary audit, to demonstrate that the staff competence is preserved for the activities listed in the accreditation scope.

4.3 Suspension due to unpaid fees

If the annual membership fee and/or the annual accreditation fee has not been paid by April 30 of the related calendar year, the member's accreditation will be suspended for eight months starting on the first of May.

The audit visit fee must be paid at least one month prior to the (re)accreditation audit. In the event of delayed payment for the audit visit, ongoing accreditation procedures may be halted. If the assessment is performed, at the end of the deadline of the second reminder, which shall not exceed the period of three months after an assessment took place, accreditation will be suspended for three months. The due date to submit the corrective actions remains the same, as agreed at the closing meeting.

The suspension will be reflected on the ISTA website, and the member will not be listed as ISTA accredited.

4.4 Suspension due to proficiency test performance below minimum standard

The laboratory's accreditation will be suspended for either of the following:

- The cumulative proficiency test performance is below the minimum performance standard as defined in 'ISTA Standard Proficiency Test Programme'
- It is obvious that the cumulative proficiency test performance will result in an overall below minimum performance standard and the laboratory has not provided evidence of appropriate corrective actions taken
- The laboratory fails to participate in two of the last six mandatory test rounds of the Proficiency Test Programme (late return of results is considered as a failure to participate).

4.5 Suspension due to non-conformity with the ISTA Accreditation Standard for Seed Sampling and Testing

If during a reaccreditation audit process a member does not comply with the terms of accreditation, the member will be so notified in writing. If immediate suspension of the accredited member is warranted as a result of observations during a reaccreditation audit, the member will be advised during the audit closing meeting that the audit team will recommend immediate suspension. The ISTA Secretary General (SG) and the ECOM-AWG will be informed by the Head of Accreditation and Technical Department (HoAT).

Appropriate corrective actions are required to be completed by a deadline agreed upon with the auditors. If an accredited member has not completed and reported the required corrective actions by that deadline a new deadline may be approved in justifiable cases, and after consultation with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department and the lead Auditor. If more than 14 days are requested a second deadline may be granted by ECOM-AWG which may not exceed a period of 1 month after the first deadline.

If, after a second deadline, the corrective actions are not submitted for evaluation the HoAT will recommend ECOM-AWG the suspension of the member's accreditation. The ECOM-AWG will consider the recommendation and decide whether to support the recommendation for suspension or not.

If the Substantial non-conformities are not considered to have been appropriately addressed in maximum 6 months from audit and the non-substantial non-conformities in maximum 9 months from audit, the audit team in agreement with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department will recommend suspension of the member's accreditation. The ECOM-AWG will consider the recommendation and decide whether to support the recommendation for suspension or not. Case by case, a re-audit may be considered by the ECOM-AWG.

If the accredited member does not comply with the accreditation requirements within the suspension period, the audit team in agreement with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department and SG will issue a recommendation not to grant (re)accreditation. The ECOM-AWG will then decide as to whether to support or not support this recommendation.

When necessary, case by case, the full ECOM will be asked for a decision.

4.6 Suspension due to changes at the accredited member

If within 90 days of any significant changes in the accredited member's ownership, management, equipment, key personnel or physical location, the member cannot demonstrate that the changes have had no influence on the technical competence or that the changes have been considered adequately in the member's quality manual and daily work, the accreditation will be suspended. The ECOM is informed.

4.7 Suspension due to misuse of the ISTA logo

The accreditation will be suspended immediately, if there is evidence that the accredited member has misused the ISTA logo. Depending upon the severity of the misuse, the member might have its accreditation withdrawn immediately (see 5.5). The ECOM is informed.

4.8 Suspension due to the issuance of ISTA Certificates during a suspension period

If during an ISTA audit it is seen that the laboratory issued ISTA Certificates during the suspension period, the laboratory will be informed, and a warning letter will be sent immediately after the audit. If the same issue is identified a second time the laboratory accreditation will be suspended. The ECOM is informed.

4.9 Suspension of Membership when the ISTA Certificates are not returned after the termination of ISTA accreditation

If the ISTA Certificates are not returned to ISTA within a defined period, a warning letter with a new due date established by ISTA will be sent to the member. In the case where the second due date is not respected the laboratory membership will be suspended. During the suspension period all membership benefits will be paused including the participation at PT. The ECOM is informed.

4.10 Notification about suspension

As soon as the Executive Committee has suspended accreditation for one of the reasons listed under 4.3 to 4.7, the member will be notified. This notification will include the scope of suspension, the date of the beginning and end of the suspension period, the measures to be taken for re-instating of the accreditation, as well as the conditions under which the suspension will lead to a withdrawal of accreditation.

4.11 Period of suspension

The period of suspension is dependent upon the reasons for suspension and the time required for taking the measures necessary for reinstating accreditation. The period of suspension is 3 months, but in special cases (as e.g., in case of unsatisfactory proficiency test performance) the period may be longer. The ECOM-AWG shall decide on any extension of the period of suspension.

4.12 Appeal against the suspension

The member has the right to appeal against the suspension within a 30-days period after notification. The 'Appeals and Complaint Procedure' applies accordingly.

4.13 Reinstatement of accreditation

Voluntary suspension of accreditation according to 4.2 will be cancelled by re-instating accreditation upon the decision of the ECOM-AWG within the period as defined by the member under the condition that the member states the reasons and proves why accreditation can be re-instated.

A suspension of accreditation due to unpaid fees according to 4.3 can be cancelled by paying the fees owed within the suspension period. No additional audit or other check is required for re-instating accreditation after suspension due to unpaid fees.

A suspension of accreditation due to a cumulative below minimum performance in the proficiency test programme according to 4.4 can be cancelled by the completion of as many test rounds as required to obtain again an overall rating that is at least a "C". The period of suspension may be reduced if corrective actions that ensure prevention of recurrence are taken, and evidence thereof is presented. Effectiveness of measures taken may be evaluated based on the following:

- Desktop review of corrective action and associated documents
- Organisation of a Mini-PT round or comparative tests
- Additional audit

Any of these measures or a combination thereof may be applied, depending on the individual situation.

Accreditation of a laboratory that has provided sufficient evidence of corrective action may be reinstated under the following conditions:

- The rating for rounds following the reinstatement must be a "C" or better.
- Effectiveness of corrective action must be corroborated by subsequent test rounds. Until a new overall rating based on six test rounds is available, the average performance since reinstatement of accreditation must be equivalent to a "C" rating or better.

A suspension due to failure to participate in two of the past six test rounds can be cancelled by the completion of a minimum of two test rounds with an "A", "B", or "C" rating and by the provision of records of corrective action which provides confidence that such an incident will not reoccur.

Suspension due to persistent non-conformities according to 4.5 can be terminated after rectifying the non-conformities within the suspension period and by satisfying the auditors that the corrective actions made are

appropriate. If necessary, the audit team might conclude that a re-audit is necessary to verify if the accredited member has addressed the non-conformities appropriately and complies with the accreditation requirements.

Suspension due to significant changes in the accredited member's ownership, management, equipment or key personnel according to 4.6 can be terminated by satisfying the auditors that the changes have had no adverse effect on the technical competence and are adequately considered in the laboratory's quality manual and daily work. An assessment by an audit team of two auditors or a system or a technical auditor only may be necessary based on the outcome of the evaluation of submitted documents.

The accredited member must bear the costs of an additional assessment. Fees are to be determined in advance.

5. WITHDRAWAL

5.1 Definition

Withdrawal of accreditation means that the entire or parts of the accreditation of the member ends before the end of the accreditation period as stated in the Certificate of Accreditation or following a re-accreditation assessment that does not result in continued accreditation.

Withdrawal of the entire accreditation implies:

- the return of the Certificate of Accreditation,
- the return of any unused ISTA Certificates; the merit of returned ISTA Seed Analysis Certificates can not be reimbursed as they must not be reused for further sales,
- the removal from the list of accredited members.

The member will be notified about the withdrawal of the accreditation in writing.

Withdrawal of parts of the accreditation implies:

- the Scope of Accreditation remains changed as it will exclude the sampling or the tests for which the accredited member was not able to demonstrate competency as well as any associated tests.

5.2 Withdrawal due to unprofessional practice

The accreditation will be withdrawn immediately, if there is evidence that the accredited member has wilfully taken actions which question the credibility of the produced results. Examples of such unprofessional practice are the falsification of results or data or the wilful destruction of evidence, samples or records that would demonstrate incompetence in the sampling or testing of a particular sample or group of samples.

5.3 Withdrawal due to expiration of the suspension period

For members that lost the privileges of the entire ISTA Accreditation: If the member did not take appropriate measures to re-instate the accreditation during the suspension period, the accreditation will be withdrawn at the end of the suspension period.

For members that lost the privileges of parts of the ISTA Accreditation: If the member did not take appropriate measures to re-instate the accreditation during the suspension period, the Scope of accreditation will remain with deletion of the sampling or the tests for which the accredited member performed below minimum standard. Tests associated with those that have been deleted may also not be performed if they rely on results from deleted tests.

5.4 Withdrawal due to the declined re-accreditation audit

If the re-accreditation audit of an accredited member is not performed after maximum three years and three months after the last ISTA audit the accreditation will be withdrawn. The ECOM is informed.

5.5 Withdrawal due to misuse of the ISTA logo

The accreditation will be withdrawn immediately, if there is evidence that the accredited member has misused the ISTA logo in any way.

5.6 Withdrawal due to the issuance of ISTA Certificates during the suspension period

If a laboratory is found to have issued ISTA Certificates in the suspension period for the third time the accreditation is terminated.

5.7 Appeal against the withdrawal of accreditation

The member has the right to appeal against withdrawal of accreditation within 30 days after notification. The 'Appeals and Complaint Procedure' applies accordingly.

5.8 Publication of withdrawal of accreditation

All instances of withdrawal of accreditation will be publicised by ISTA. Notices will be placed in Seed Testing International and ISTA online.

6. RE-APPLICATION

6.1 The withdrawal of accreditation will not preclude a member from re-applying for accreditation at a future date. Such application will be evaluated under the same requirements and procedures applicable to every other applicant. The member will have no privileges from the withdrawn accreditation when applying for a new accreditation.

ANNEX

N.A.

DISTRIBUTION LIST

ISTA website

REVISION HISTORY

Version #	Changes
2.5	<p>Directive text: ISTA International Seed Analysis Certificates replaced by ISTA Certificates</p> <p>1.1 ISTA Laboratory Accreditation Standard replaced by ISTA Accreditation Standard for Seed Testing and Seed Sampling</p> <p>2.2 PT-G-01-The ISTA Proficiency Test Programme replaced by PT-P-01, ISTA Standard Proficiency Test Programme</p> <p>2.3 Adm-D-03-Appeals and Complaints Procedure replaced by Acc-P-05, Appeals and Complaints Procedure</p> <p>4.3 If the annual membership fee and/or the annual accreditation fee has not been paid by April 30 October 4 of the related calendar year, the laboratory's accreditation will be suspended for eight three months starting on the first of October May. The audit visit fee must be paid at least one month prior to the (re-)accreditation audit, or three months prior to the accreditation audit.</p> <p>4.5 Suspension due to non-conformity with the ISTA Laboratory Accreditation Standard <u>Accreditation Standard for Seed Testing and Seed Sampling</u></p> <p>In justifiable cases, and after consultation with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department and the lead auditor a second deadline may be granted</p> <p>If, after a second deadline, non-conformities are not considered to have been appropriately addressed, the audit team in agreement with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department will recommend suspension of the laboratory's accreditation.</p> <p>If the laboratory does not comply with the accreditation requirements within the suspension period, the audit team in agreement with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department will issue a recommendation not to grant (re-)accreditation.</p>

2.6	<p>Preamble changed to scope; annex and distribution included</p> <p><u>Additional conditions for accreditation suspension and withdrawal</u></p> <p><u>4.8 Suspension due to the issuance of ISTA Certificates during a suspension period</u> If during an ISTA audit it is seen that the laboratory issued ISTA Certificates during the suspension period, the laboratory will be informed, and a warning letter will be sent immediately after the audit.</p> <p>If the same issue is identified a second time the laboratory accreditation will be suspended.</p> <p><u>4.9 Suspension of Membership when the ISTA Certificates are not returned after the termination of ISTA accreditation</u> If the ISTA Certificates are not returned to ISTA within a defined period a warning letter with a new due date established by ISTA will be sent to the member. In the case where the second due date is not respected the laboratory membership will be suspended. During the suspension period all membership benefits will be paused including the participation at PT .</p> <p><u>5.5 Withdrawal due to the issuance of ISTA Certificates during the suspension period</u> If a laboratory is found that issued ISTA Certificates in the suspension period for the third time the accreditation is terminated.</p> <p>Flowchart removed.</p>
3.0	New layout
4.0	<p>The Directive is updated to reflect the practice of the laboratories status according to the new ISTA website.</p> <p>The authority of ECOM-AWG and full ECOM are detailed</p> <p>Addition:</p> <p><u>5.4 Withdrawal due to the declined re-accreditation audit</u> If the re-accreditation audit of a laboratory or sampling entity is not performed after maximum three years and three months after the last ISTA audit the accreditation will be withdrawn. The ECOM is informed.</p>
5.0	<p>Scope detailed:</p> <p>This document forms part of the conditions of laboratories, laboratories with facilities at multiple sites, laboratories and sampling entities with sampling units at multiple sites, and sampling entities accreditation under the ISTA Accreditation Standard for Seed Sampling and Testing. For the purpose of this Directive, the term ISTA "accredited member" refers to an accredited laboratory, laboratories with facilities at multiple sites, laboratories and sampling entities with sampling units at multiple sites, and accredited sampling entity.</p> <p>4.2, addition</p> <p>The ECOM-AWG may approve an extension of more than 6 months period, considering an approved recovery plan with for example Proficiency Tests results, interlaboratory comparative tests, or an ISTA extraordinary audit, to demonstrate that the staff competence is preserved for the activities listed in the accreditation scope.</p> <p>4.5, addition:</p> <p>Appropriate corrective actions are required to be completed by a deadline agreed upon with the auditors. If an accredited member has not completed and reported the required corrective actions by that deadline a new deadline may be approved in justifiable cases, and after consultation with the Head of the Accreditation and Technical Department and the lead Auditor. If more than 14 days are requested a second deadline may be granted by ECOM-AWG which may not exceed a period of 1 month after the first deadline.</p> <p>If, after a second deadline, the corrective actions are not submitted for evaluation the HoAT will recommend ECOM-AWG the suspension of the member's accreditation. The ECOM-AWG will consider the recommendation and decide whether to support the recommendation for suspension or not.</p> <p>Maximum due dates for addressing the corrective actions: Substantial non-conformities maximum 6 months from audit and the non-substantial non-conformities in maximum 9 months from audit</p> <p>4.13, comparative tests added</p> <p>Minor edits for clarity.</p>