

Ken Knows Accreditation (UKAS & MCERTS)

Accreditation for labs can be broadly split into 2 parts:

- 1) ISO17025 accreditation of the laboratory, specifically the quality management system
- 2) Accreditation of specific tests or techniques to an accredited standard (ISO17025 or MCERTS)

Both are accredited by UKAS as the sole national accrediting body for the UK.

The lab accreditation ensures that we have an appropriate and fully compliant quality management system, and all our documented processes are performed in line with that system – this covers the full scope of our activities, not just the specific analytical tests. It can be thought of as an extension to ISO9001 but with very specific requirements in addition to a general management system that are specific to testing and calibration labs. A lab can then, and only once this accreditation is granted, submit to UKAS for accreditation of a specific test or analytical method.

To achieve this a range of validity work must be done to demonstrate a series of performance criteria to UKAS, the suitability of the approach and the completeness of the associated documentation and procedures.

Pending assessment and review, accreditation to ISO17025 (commonly referred to as 'UKAS accredited') can be confirmed, but that accreditation is specific to the parameters of the validation – for example those determinands by that specific technique in samples of the specific matrix type tested. Any variation on those prescribed parameters – i.e. samples are of a different matrix type – would mean the use of a methodology that is theoretically accredited, and would be performed in exactly the same way under the guidance of the same quality management system, but the result would carry no accreditation on the report.

For soils, labs can also apply for MCERTS accreditation on specific test methods, which requires further data to be submitted and imposes tighter controls, but is similarly prescriptive in terms of what it covers.

A common question is "why don't you get all tests accredited?" as in all commercial labs there will be a mix of unaccredited, ISO17025 and MCERTS accredited tests. The simple answer is cost. Achieving and maintaining accreditation requires considerable investment in terms of time, resource and money, and it is not always practically feasible to commit to accrediting all methods, especially where there is limited commercial demand or regulatory requirement. What most labs have, and this includes Chemtech, as part of their continual improvement process is an *Extension to Scope* plan whereby we identify priority activities and target those for application and addition to our accreditation schedule.

With specific regard to unaccredited tests, as suggested previously, they may not lack accreditation due to performance or suitability, but due to their positioning in the ongoing extension to scope program. All methods are performed under the tenets of the same accredited quality management system with quality control in place, so cannot be assumed to be of a 'lesser quality' simply by virtue of not as yet having been formally accredited.



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