

National Laboratory Association – South Africa  
Persequor Technopark  
1 De Havilland Crescent  
Pretoria  
Tel: +27 (0) 12 349 1500  
Fax: +27 (0) 12 349 1501  
<http://www.nla.org.za>



December 2013

## An Overview

### Introduction

Whilst the National Laboratory Association, (NLA), was formed in 1998; its origins began over 20 years ago when the National Calibration Service, (NCS) was formed at the National Physical Research Laboratory, (NPRL) of the CSIR.

The NLA continued the rich heritage of both Calibration services and Accreditation in the country and these two organisations then brought South Africa to the point where accreditation was not only required for laboratories but it was also necessary to extend this capability into other areas such as Inspection and Certification. The NLA was then requested to develop a new company and established the South African National Accreditation System, SANAS.

The accreditation activities were transferred into SANAS, and the laboratory community decided that it would be advantageous that a new organisation be formed in order to be in a position to represent the interests of the laboratories.

This new non-profit organisation felt that it should retain some continuity with the past and decided to retain the NLA acronym but renamed the organisation the **National Laboratory Association**. In 2012 the association was renamed NLA-SA (National Laboratory Association – South Africa).

### Membership

The membership of the Association comprises of the following components.

- Companies
- Individuals

It was decided from the outset that the NLA-SA would target as broad a base as possible in order to draw on potential members and therefore membership is open to laboratories that are either accredited or not accredited. The only proviso is that members subscribe to the ethical principles of the association. This “Code of Conduct” has been designed with the view that all members need to adhere to it and that it recognises that voluntary adherence is a very strong motivator when dealing with the market place. It does not do away with the need for accreditation but rather enhances and strengthens the laboratory’s position. The need for an ethically strong community is clear and forms the basis of South Africa’s strong international reputation. This approach is one that the Association via its members wishes to continue supporting.

While the vast majority of NLA-SA members are corporate structures, both large and small, the Association also has created two associate categories. One is for individuals, who for whatever reason are not employed permanently in a laboratory and the other for organisations, typically suppliers, who wish to be associated with the NLA-SA. The fees for all these categories are detailed in the table below.

In line with a Board decision the following fee structure was approved for 2014.

<b>CATEGORY of ORGANISATION</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TECHNICAL STAFF MEMBERS</b>	<b>MEMBERSHIP FEE 2014*</b>
Category 1	1 – 10	R 1 780 – 00
Category 2	11 – 30	R 3 700 – 00
Category 3	> 30	R 6 000 – 00
Associate Member	Corporate	R 2 750 – 00
Associate Member	Individual	R 360 – 00

\*NB: Fees exclude 14% VAT

These categories have been designed to rationalise the disparity between small and large organisations and apply irrespective of Accreditation status.

### **What does the NLA do?**

The association is active in the following major areas

- Technical Training
- Professional Recognition (MetCert Scheme for Metrologists)
- Annual Workshop & Conferences
- Representation Locally & Internationally
- Sub Committees

#### **1. Training**

In the past the various organisations mentioned above in the introductory paragraph actively provided and organised technical training for Calibration/Metrology laboratories. The NLA-SA via its training initiative continues to provide this service. During 2014 the NLA-SA plans to once again co-ordinate and arrange more than 30 courses for the laboratory community. Of some significance are the new courses which have been developed over the past few years to meet the demands of the laboratory community.

Examples of these courses are the following,

- Statistical Process Control (SPC)
- Geometric & Dimensional Tolerancing (GD&T)
- Method Validation for both Analytical as well as Calibration Laboratories
- Procedure and Report Writing for Calibration Laboratories
- Co-ordinate Measuring Metrology (CMM)
- Basic Analytical Laboratory Techniques
- Microbiology Laboratory Skills

For an updated Course schedule, readers are requested to go to our website or contact the Office and speak to Ms Maggie Rossouw.

## **2. Professional Recognition for Metrologists**

After extensive discussions with SANAS, the NLA-SA established a Task Team to establish a Professional Certification Scheme for metrologists and during the last quarter of 2009 the application documents for this very important scheme were made available.

This scheme provides Calibration laboratories with one mechanism for satisfying the SANAS requirement for Calibration Technical Signatories and those who are interested are encouraged to consider helping their staff to become certified. Further information, as well as the application documents, can be viewed / downloaded from the NLA-SA web site under the MetCert heading on the home page.

## **3. Annual Test & Measurement Conference**

For more than 25 years the NLA has organised and co-ordinated the T&M Conference. This event continues to be the highlight of the year for the Association. About 200 people attended the 2013 Conference which was held in the Gauteng area at the Misty Hills Country Hotel during October 2013. This event is a truly wonderful opportunity for networking and sharing of knowledge and experience to take place.

Over the years the Conference has grown in size and stature substantially and many attendees, especially from outside the country have remarked on the fact that this is an extremely professional and well run conference, on a par with anything available elsewhere in the world.

## **4. Representation – Locally & Internationally**

It is vital that the laboratory community is adequately represented at various forums both locally and internationally in order to, where necessary, provide a cohesive voice and input to matters which ultimately have a direct impact on the community.

The NLA-SA has therefore established a number of relationships in order to achieve this goal amongst which SANAS, NMISA and SABS Standards Division are the most important locally.

In addition a good working relationship with the Department of Trade and Industry, (dti), exists, giving the association the opportunity to make issues raised by members known to government.

Internationally, the NLA-SA is directly represented on the International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation, ILAC, via its committee known as the Laboratory Committee, LC. Through this committee, the NLA-SA is in a position to directly contribute to the technical issues being raised on an international level as well as Accreditation Policy and Arrangement level issues. This role ensures that the opinions of the membership are directly communicated to ILAC and helps to influence the various decisions taken.

In addition the NLA-SA is an International Affiliate Member of the Eurolab Organisation and this also helps to provide the South African Laboratory Community with vital information regarding developments in Europe especially with regard to EU Legislation as it affects measurements.

The most recent development in this regard is the formal relationship that has been entered into between the NLA-SA and the US based NCSLI (National Conference for Standards Laboratories International). With its history of more than 60 years, the NLA-SA is confident that this will help in furthering its aim of assisting South African laboratories to learn and improve.

## 5. Proficiency Testing (PT)

The NLA-SA has since its inception in 1998 run various schemes for calibration laboratories. Over the past number of years this has been extended into various testing laboratory fields and we are now pleased to be able to offer the following schemes.

### Calibration Schemes

#### Field of Metrology

DCLF

Temperature

Mass

Torque

Force

The dates for these schemes can be obtained from the web site or the NLA-SA office.

### Testing Schemes

Programme	No of Rounds	
Pesticide Formulations	4	
Water Microbiology	6	For the dates of the various rounds please contact the NLA Office
Food Microbiology	4	
Civils Material Testing	3	

For pricing and technical details regarding all the schemes as well as any requests for new schemes, please contact the NLA Office.

## 6. Subcommittees

During the past few years the NLA has broadened its structure by introducing various sub-committees. The purpose of these committees is to address those aspects that are of specific interest to a discipline or sector. To that end the following sub committees have been established:

- Civil & Road Engineering (MatCivils)
- Automotive
- Stack Testers (STSA)

It is hoped that more of these will be established in the future and that in this way even more companies / laboratories will derive benefit from their membership.

## 7. The Future

The NLA-SA's primary objective is to attract as many companies/organisations, which have laboratory or measurement interests, into becoming members and the current membership of the NLA has grown to more than 220.

### So why become a member of the NLA-SA?

The reasons that companies and individuals have chosen to become members of the association are varied, however it is apparent that there are two major benefits to being a member.

1. The first is that by becoming active in the NLA-SA and supporting its aims and goals, members are directly contributing to the continued success of this unique and rewarding industry. The measurement and testing laboratories collectively represent a very important and vital capability. It is essential that these skills are not lost and

that members of the community at large are made aware of their importance. Whilst individual companies may not be able to communicate this message on their own, clearly an association such as the NLA-SA can be effective in this role.

In addition, a single voice speaking on behalf of the community is much more likely to gain the attention of other organisations rather than the lone voice in the wilderness which is often the case for individuals.

2. On a practical level, membership of this association ensures that members are provided with a suitable financial incentive when attending or participating in any of the following activities.

- Training courses
- Annual Workshop
- PT

The 'discount' for using the NLA-SA's services will virtually ensure that the annual membership fee is paid.

So can there be any clearer reason why you and/or your organisation shouldn't join the current members and become a member of the National Laboratory Association – South Africa today.

We look forward to welcoming you and printing your membership certificate.

You can find us at <http://www.nla.org.za> where you can fill in the form electronically or you can post us the completed application form that we sent with this letter back to the NLA office for processing.