

INDUCTION OF NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Background

Laboratory accreditation according to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 is a third-party formal recognition of a laboratory's competence to perform specific tasks within a defined scope of activities. Qualified and skilled staff is the key for ensuring the correctness and reliability of tests and/or calibrations performed by a laboratory. ISO/IEC 17025:2017 stipulates requirements for the competence of personnel; induction training is not explicitly mentioned. It is, however, in the interest of a laboratory to provide new staff with a comprehensive and targeted induction to quickly integrate newcomers into the work environment, and that their performance meets the laboratory's quality requirements.

1. Purpose and objective of induction training

During the induction phase, the new colleague receives the required information

- i) to perform the tasks to meet the laboratory's service level,
- ii) to understand the organisational structure and operational processes of the laboratory and how to contribute to the fulfilment of the laboratory's mission, its policies and objectives,
- iii) to interact with colleagues, and
- iv) to acquire the knowledge and skills and/or to identify further training needs for performing specific tasks in the new job, if necessary.

The induction training aims at introducing the jobholder into his job. This may lead to formal authorisations for the operation of equipment and to the performance of test and calibration methods and could therefore be related to the probationary period report.

2. Content and duration of induction training

The content, duration and practical implementation of the induction training depend on the complexity and nature of the laboratory and, where appropriate, its parent organisation, as well as the work and qualifications of the new staff.

The induction training typically consists of two parts: the general part covers aspects ranging from an introduction to the organisational environment, its processes and administrative procedures, security and informatics to social aspects and well-being; the individual part is tailored to the job specific requirements and takes into account the profile of the new employee .

An indicative list of relevant induction elements is annexed for consideration.

3. Documentation and records

Provisions for the induction of new staff should be documented as a part of the procedure on staff training and career development process etc. .

General information handed out in the form of an up-to-date handbook will help newcomers familiarize themselves with internal procedures and rules.

It is useful to create a series of forms that covers the various topics of induction training.

A practical approach could be to dedicate an individual form to each of the five thematic areas detailed in the annexed list of induction elements. The individual induction needs - derived from the job description, the job assignment and the profile of the jobholder - are documented in a separate form. Limiting the forms to one sheet per thematic area is practical and combats the inflation of documents.

It is useful to design the forms in such a way that they can simultaneously serve as checklists and records. The newcomer(s) and trainer(s) subsequently complete the forms as the induction progresses. Different forms on different thematic areas may be used in parallel by different trainers. Each form is signed by the trainer and trainee. The trainer confirms the

successful completion with the signature; the jobholder's signature confirms the understanding of the topic. Where appropriate, formal authorisations are issued, and further training needs are identified and documented according to the laboratory's procedures.

The forms, duly filled in and signed, are filed e.g. in the personal file or training map of the jobholder and serve as a record of the completion of the induction and, where appropriate, as justification for authorisations. Such formal authorisations given for e.g. operating instrumentation, performing tests and/or specific tasks, and including any pertinent limitations, should be kept accessible in the daily work.

4. Effectiveness of induction training

The effectiveness of the induction training should be assessed and recorded according to the laboratory's procedures.

If further training or expert training is necessary, a training plan will be prepared at the end of the induction. This is especially important when a laboratory plans training needs on an annual basis and newcomers are otherwise not adequately trained on the basis of their individual needs.

As part of the induction, it may be helpful to establish a coaching or feedback mechanism during the first months. Sufficient time should also be allocated for regular discussions with the line management. The value is two-fold. First, the new staff is better integrated into their daily work and more easily adapts to the new environment and policies of the organisation. Second, a laboratory benefits from a new staff member's knowledge, experience and fresh ideas. Each new staff member presents an opportunity for organisational learning and improvement that a laboratory should not miss.

5. Conclusion

A well organised induction training targeted to the needs of the new jobholder is a pro-active effort that is worth spending. It pays off with the newcomer's rapid integration, prevents or reduces the occurrence of deviations and non-conforming work due to a lack of awareness or understanding of relevant provisions and procedures, and it strengthens the new staff member's ability to efficiently and effectively contributing to the laboratory's performance, quality objectives and improvement, right from the start.

ANNEX - Indicative list of elements that could be part of staff induction

Induction should be planned well in advance. The preparatory activities include the internal communication of the newcomer's name, the date of arrival, the workplace, the names of the supervisor/line manager and relevant colleague(s), the preparation of a personalised welcome package, office assignment, desk installation, telephone, PC, access rights, user profile, e-mail account, internal mail service, update of organisation chart and internal phone list, etc.

In general, the main elements of induction training focus on the following thematic areas:

1. Management and general administration

- Mission, vision, values, policies, corporate identity, organisation chart, core processes
- Personal data protection, code of good administrative behaviour, non-disclosure and conflict of interest statements
- Security, access to premises, service badge, internal phone number and telephone usage, working time registration
- Working hours, leave and sick leave, business trip rules, stationary supply
- Training and career development, appraisal, objectives, training catalogue
- Correspondence, standard templates, e-mail usage and policy, meetings, visitors
- Purchase procedure, work request procedure
- Library, conferences and seminars

2. Quality Management System

- Outline of the Quality Management System and responsible functions
- Document and record management, initials and signatures
- Explanation of internal auditing procedure, non-conforming work procedure,
- Work instructions and requirements for the use of analytical equipment, pipettes, balances, instrument manuals and user logbooks
- Test method work instructions, provisions for the approval and release of test results

3. Information technology, security and data protection

- Information security, access rights, user name and password, usage of network, intranet, video conferences, wireless facilities
- Explanation of software applications used for the administration of staff data
- Laboratory software (LIMS), data treatment and evaluation, storage and backup of laboratory data, approval and authorisation mechanism
- Provisions for data protection and confidentiality

4. Laboratory work, housekeeping, occupational health & safety, environment

- Quality control measures
- Safety instructions (Manual), responsible staff for laboratories and buildings
- Laboratory tour and access rules, explanation of safety rules and equipment (lab coats, gloves, goggles, eye showers, body showers, first aid kits, first-aider phone, spill kits)
- Alarm & emergency instructions, emergency calls and phone numbers, fire brigade, fire extinguisher, emergency exits, meeting point (fire, evacuation)
- Laboratory housekeeping procedure, handling of hazardous substances, chemicals cabinets and chemical storage room, explanation of gas storage and use, chemical waste collection and disposal
- General store, workshop, drawing office
- Ergonomics, smoking restriction

NB: Laboratories operating in ISO 14001 and/or OHSAS 18001 certified organisations should evidence the related aspects in the provisions laid down for the protection of the environment and the occupational health and safety.

5. Social and welfare

- Staff committee, union representation
- Medical service, social assistance

- Coffee/tea and lunch breaks, cafeteria opening hours
- Staff club and events, day-care