AASHTO Accreditation Policy and Guidance on Suspension, Revocation, and Reinstatement Resulting from Proficiency Samples Issues

Purpose

This AASHTO Accreditation Program (AAP) Policy and Guidance document is intended to clearly explain the process for suspensions, revocations, and reinstatements resulting from low ratings and/or no results on proficiency sample results for accredited standards. Examples are provided to clearly illustrate how suspensions result from repeat low ratings.

Terminology

1. *Accredited Since Date* – the date of initial accreditation (if accreditation has been successfully maintained).

1.1. Accredited Since Dates are not reset when a suspension occurs, but they are reset following revocation.

2. *Low Ratings* – ratings of ±2, ±1, and 0

3. *Low Ratings that Result in Suspensions* – repeat ratings of ±1 and/or 0 on the same test property on both (odd and even numbered) samples on two consecutive rounds

4. *Satisfactory Ratings* – ratings of ±3, ±4, or ±5

4.1. Satisfactory ratings are required for reinstatement of a suspended test method.

5. *Suppressed Ratings* – ratings that have been not issued due to the presence of a concern with data distribution or a known issue with the samples in that round

6. *Test Property* – a line item or single test result component in a proficiency report

Policy

The policy for proficiency sample enrollment requirements for specific standards may be found in the AASHTO Accreditation Policy on PSP Participation.

The policy for proficiency testing criteria may be found in the Procedures Manual for the Accreditation of Construction Materials Testing Laboratories.

Guidance

1. **Low Ratings/No Data on a Single Sample**

1.1. When low ratings (±2, ±1, and 0) are received or data is not submitted on one sample or both samples in the round, the laboratory must complete a corrective action report detailing the investigation into the low ratings and any corrective actions that were implemented within 60 days of receiving the sample report and retain the corrective action report. The laboratory is not required to submit corrective action reports to the AAP. If results were not submitted, the laboratory should focus on how to avoid missing future samples.

2. **Low Ratings/No Data on Two Consecutive Samples**

2.1. If the laboratory receives scores of ±1 or 0, does not submit test data, or a combination of the two on the same test property for both samples on two consecutive rounds, accreditation for the applicable standard(s) will be suspended.

2.1.1. If the ratings for a test property have been suppressed, the combination of two consecutive

rounds defaults to the last round that included ratings that were not suppressed. For example, the 2024 and 2026 round included ratings, but the ratings were suppressed in the 2025 round, the consecutive rounds that will be evaluated for suspension will be the 2024 and 2026 round.

2.1.2. This is a common example: The following scores on T27/C136 on consecutive rounds of the Fine Aggregate sample **WOULD** lead to a suspension. This laboratory received ratings of 1 and 0 on the same test property for both samples on two consecutive sample rounds.

Test Property	Ratings 2019		Ratings 2020	
	Sample 203	Sample 204	Sample 207	Sample 208
No.8	5	-4	1	1
No. 16	0	1	0	0
No. 30	3	3	3	-2
No. 50	4	4	-4	-4
No. 100	-2	-2	-2	-3
No. 200	1	4	3	2

2.1.3. The following scores on AASHTO T27/ASTM C136 on consecutive rounds of the Fine Aggregate sample **WOULD NOT** lead to a suspension because the laboratory received ratings of 1 and 0 on both samples over two consecutive rounds, but the low ratings were not on the same test property.

Test Property	Ratings 2019		Ratings 2020	
	Sample 203	Sample 204	Sample 207	Sample 208
No.8	0	-4	1	1
No. 16	0	1	5	5
No. 30	0	3	3	-2
No. 50	0	5	0	-4
No. 100	0	-2	-2	-3
No. 200	0	4	3	2

3. Resolving a Suspension

3.1. The laboratory may choose to carry the suspension on their accreditation listing until the next sample round. If the laboratory receives satisfactory ratings on all test properties on the suspended test method on at least one of the samples in the next regular round of testing, the laboratory needs to submit a corrective action report to the AAP in order to resolve the suspension.

3.2. If the laboratory wishes to have the accreditation reinstated before the next sample round, the laboratory may order a blind sample by performing the following actions.

3.2.1. Use the following link to order blind AASHTO re:source samples: https://aashtoresource.org/psp/request-extra-samples.

3.2.2. Use the following link to order blind CCRL proficiency samples: https://www.ccrl.us/psp-Documents/ExtraPSPSamplesforSale.pdf.

3.2.3. The laboratory will be issued an invoice for the blind sample, which must be paid prior to shipment. Once payment is made, the proficiency sample program will ship the sample to the laboratory.

3.3. After the laboratory receives the sample and performs the test methods for which they are suspended, the laboratory shall submit the test results, data sheets/calculations, and corrective action reports to the Quality Analyst assigned to the laboratory.

3.3.1. If the laboratory receives satisfactory ratings on the blind sample and submits all required documentation, the Quality Analyst will process the reinstatement and create a follow-up file to monitor performance on the next normal round of proficiency samples. In cases where the blind sample consists of a pair of samples, satisfactory ratings must be received on all test properties on at least one of the samples.

4. **Low Ratings on Blind Samples**

4.1. If the laboratory does not receive satisfactory ratings on the blind sample and/or all required documentation is not submitted, the suspension will remain in place. The laboratory is permitted to order another round of blind samples or allow the suspension to remain in place until the next normal round of testing.

4.2. Continued low ratings on blind samples or incomplete corrective action may lead to revocation of the standard(s) in question and a requirement for a surveillance assessment before accreditation can be reinstated. These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the AAP Manager and the Administrative Task group (ATG).

5. **What Happens After a Suspension is Resolved Using a Blind Sample?**

5.1. If the laboratory receives satisfactory ratings on all test properties on the suspended test method on at least one of the samples in the next regular round of testing, the issue is completely resolved.

5.2. If the laboratory receives low ratings on the same test property for the suspended test method on the next regular round of testing, the accreditation for the standard(s) in question shall be revoked. The same process is used to reinstate accreditation following revocation that is used to reinstate accreditation following suspension. The laboratory's "Accredited Since" date is reset after revocation.

5.3. If the laboratory receives low ratings on a different test property for the suspended test method on the next regular round of testing, the accreditation for the standard(s) in question shall be suspended. The same process is used to reinstate accreditation following the initial suspension.

6. **Revocation Due to Proficiency Sample Testing**

6.1. If a laboratory that was suspended after the previous round of testing receives low ratings or does not submit results on the next normal round of testing, the accreditation for the test method(s) in question shall be revoked.

6.2. Revocation of accreditation for certain standards also leads to the withdrawal of other dependent standards. See the AASHTO Accreditation Policy and Guidance on Prerequisites for more information on this subject.

6.3. Revoked standards may be reinstated by following the same processes specified in Section 3 of this document.

7. **Other Situations**

7.1. If accreditation for a standard was revoked due to an issue other than low ratings or no results on a proficiency sample, satisfactory participation in the proficiency sample program shall be

verified before the laboratory is eligible for reinstatement.

7.1.1. In cases where the laboratory would have been suspended or revoked for low ratings or no results while the other issue was being resolved, the accreditation shall be denied until satisfactory ratings and corrective actions are submitted on either a blind sample or the next normal round of testing.

7.2. If accreditation for a standard is revoked due to repeat low ratings or no data on proficiency samples, and the laboratory intends to have the accreditation reinstated, the laboratory shall include the revoked standard in their next AASHTO re:source or CCRL assessment.

7.2.1. In order for reinstatement to occur, the laboratory shall resolve all nonconformities associated with the assessment report, receive satisfactory ratings on the relevant proficiency sample, and submit a corrective action report addressing the root cause of the low ratings.

7.2.2. If the laboratory received satisfactory ratings for the revoked test method on the two last consecutive rounds of proficiency sample testing, the accreditation shall be granted without a corrective action report being submitted as long as all nonconformities noted in the assessment report have been resolved.