

## Guide 34: answer to accreditation?

**Peter J. Jenks<sup>a</sup> and Robert Lenk<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>the Jenks Partnership, Newhaven House, Junction Road, Alderbury, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 3AZ, UK. E-mail: editor@rmreport.com

<sup>b</sup>Romil Ltd, The Source, Convent Drive, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9QT, UK. E-mail: robert.lenk@romil.com



**Peter Jenks**



**Robert Lenk**

In the last edition of *Spectroscopy Europe* this column reviewed some of the ways that are, might or should be used to accredit the producers of reference materials. Each of the routes mentioned has their proponents and detractors and the camps are far from reaching agreement. At the moment the consensus of opinion amongst many national metrology laboratories (NMIs) is that the best way is accreditation to ISO Guide 34. Some believe that this should become an ISO standard in its own right (possibly ISO 17034). It is interesting to note that, to the best of these author's knowledge, none of the national NMIs are yet accredited to ISO Guide 34 or indeed as calibration laboratories to ISO 17025.

The last RM Column, and also an article by Roger Brockway in the Autumn Edition of *UKAS Update* ([www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com)) provoked a sharp response from Dr Robert Lenk, MD of Romil Limited. Romil are a leading UK producer of Certified Reference Materials and an organisation that is accredited by UKAS to ISO 17025 as a Calibration Laboratory for the calibration of chemical reference materials and solutions. Romil were the first (and are still the only, to our knowledge) laboratory, whether commercial or "non-commercial", anywhere in the world to be so accredited for calibration of these types of materials, and as such are very proud of their accreditation.

Dr Lenk is firmly of the opinion that accreditation to ISO REMCO Guide 34 is NOT the way to go. He contacted *SE* to state his views on the subject: they are logical, well developed and deserve to be heard. So this column is based on the briefing he provided!

His key question is "what additional benefits can Guide 34 confer that the

existing ISO 17025:1994 does not"? He first agreed that Guide 34 has superficial advantages as the existing ISO 17025 only cross references to the old, and now superseded, 1994 ISO 9000 versions. The supporters of Guide 34 point out that as it includes requirements of both 17025 and ISO 9001:2000 it must be the way to go. But they neglect to recognise that an organisation that has both ISO 9001:2000 AND ISO 17025 as a CALIBRATION laboratory is ALREADY at the same level as accreditation to Guide 34 would bring. Here lies the crux of the debate. ISO 9001 is, to the NMI community, almost unknown. But all commercial producers of reference materials have worked with ISO 9000 since the mid 1980s. So for any company that has ISO 9001:2000 it must be better to ADD TO IT, according to need, rather than start again. The original compilers of ISO 17025 foresaw this and work is in hand to bring it up to date with the current ISO 9000:2000 flavours.

A proliferation of standards or the development of special standards for "special" does not help in any way: it just serves to confuse and make clear mutual recognition more difficult. In Dr Lenk's view to work towards Guide 34 represents duplicated effort in a pointless exercise. It is difficult to refute his view. ISO Guide 34 is NOT yet a recognised International Standard, whereas 9001 and 17025 are. ISO REMCO Guide 34 is, as its title states, only a GUIDE. It is also very unlikely that Guide 34 would be elevated to such a status as "17034", before the introduction of a revised 17025, incorporating the current 9001:2000.

Dr Lenk points out that Roger Brockway, in his article, writes about "uneducated specifiers"—does he mean the Quality

Managers responsible for analytical laboratories across Europe and who are the users of reference materials and the readers of *Spectroscopy Europe*? Mr Brockway says that he finds many are impressed by ISO 17025, in the absence of ISO 9001. It is doubtful that any of these "quality professionals" work in a world where they are not well versed with ISO 9001, but most are still learning about the world of ISO 17025 and almost all know nothing of ISO Guide 34.

This column supports Dr Lenk's view that it is far better to keep with ISO 17025 than develop yet a new standard. ISO 17025 builds on the foundation of 9001, such that accreditees of 17025 can honestly state that they are compliant with the current version of 9001, and that this is stated in the certificate. It is worth pointing out that recent re-issues of UKAS ISO 17025 certificates have removed reference to the 9000 series; this seems odd, given the common heritage and should be re-instated as soon as the new 17025 standard has been implemented.

All stakeholders in the chemical reference materials field have more than enough work to do to promote the benefits and understanding of ISO 17025. So why are the academics in the NMIs so focussed on developing another way to achieve the same objective? Where is the data that shows they have asked the user community what they and their customers want or need?

Once revised to include the key elements of ISO 9001:2000, ISO 17025 will be a standard that will be applicable to users, specifiers, suppliers and producers alike and easily understandable to those "uneducated" outside. If it is really needed, then elements of ISO Guide 34 can be added to some future revision of ISO 9001 and ISO 17025.

But let us not go down the path of developing another standard just because we can.