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Standard Guide for Qualification of Measurement Methods by a Laboratory Within the Nuclear Industry[1]

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides guidance for selecting, validating, and qualifying measurement methods when qualification is required for a specific program. The recommended practices presented in this guide provide a major part of a quality assurance program for the laboratory data (see Fig. 1). Qualification helps to assure that the data produced will meet established requirements.

1.2 The activities intended to assure the quality of analytical laboratory measurement data are diagrammed in Fig. 1. Discussion and guidance related to some of these activities appear in the following sections:

	Section
Selection of Measurement Methods	5
Validation of Measurement Methods	6
Qualification of Measurement Methods	7
Control	8
Personnel Qualification	9

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*[2]

C859 Terminology Relating to Nuclear Materials

C1009 Guide for Establishing and Maintaining a Quality Assurance Program for Analytical Laboratories Within the Nuclear Industry

C1128 Guide for Preparation of Working Reference Materials for Use in Analysis of Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials

C1156 Guide for Establishing Calibration for a Measurement Method Used to Analyze Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials

C1210 Guide for Establishing a Measurement System Quality Control Program for Analytical Chemistry Laboratories Within the Nuclear Industry

C1297 Guide for Qualification of Laboratory Analysts for the Analysis of Nuclear Fuel Cycle Materials

E177 Practice for Use of the Terms Precision and Bias in ASTM Test Methods

E2554 Practice for Estimating and Monitoring the Uncertainty of Test Results of a Test Method Using Control Chart Techniques

E2655 Guide for Reporting Uncertainty of Test Results and Use of the Term Measurement Uncertainty in ASTM Test Methods

2.2 *ISO Standards:*[3]

ISO/IEC 17025 General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories

2.3 *Other Standards:*

ASME NQA-1 Quality Assurance Requirements for Nuclear Facility Applications[4]

IEEE/ASTM SI 10 American National Standard for Metric Practice[5]

JCGM-100 Evaluation of Measurement Data – Guide to the Expression of Uncertainty in Measurement (GUM)[6]

JCGM-200 International Vocabulary of Metrology – Basic and General Concepts and Associated Terms (VIM)[6]

3. Terminology

3.1 Except as otherwise defined herein, definitions of terms are as given in Terminology C859.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

[1] This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C26 on Nuclear Fuel Cycle and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C26.08 on Quality Assurance, Statistical Applications, and Reference Materials.

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[2] For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

[3] Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, http://www.ansi.org.

[4] Available from American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), ASME International Headquarters, Two Park Ave., New York, NY 10016-5990, http://www.asme.org.

[5] Available from Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. (IEEE), 445 Hoes Ln., Piscataway, NJ 08854-4141, http://www.ieee.org.

[6] Available from International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, CP 56, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, http://www.iso.org.

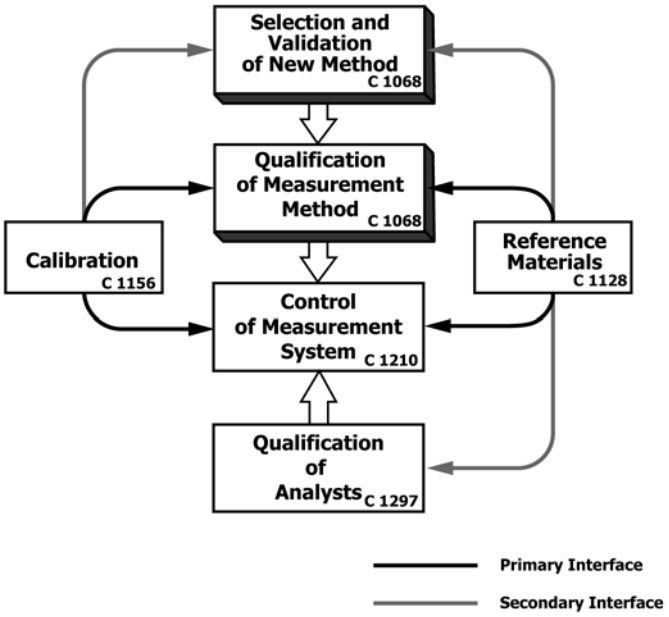

FIG. 1 Quality Assurance of Analytical Laboratory Data

3.2.1 *fitness for purpose, n*—degree to which data produced by a measurement process enables a user to make technically and administratively correct decisions for a stated purpose (**1**).[7]

3.2.2 *qualification*—a formal process to provide a desired level of confidence that measurement methods used will produce data suitable for their intended use. The methods must meet established criteria prior to use and must be used under conditions established for qualifications.

3.2.3 *representative sample, n*—a sample resulting from a sampling plan that can be expected to adequately reflect the properties of interest of the parent population (**1**).

3.2.4 *validation, n*—investigation to determine the applicability of a measurement method to a particular use.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Because of concerns for safety and the protection of nuclear materials from theft, stringent specifications are placed on chemical processes and the chemical and physical properties of nuclear materials. Strict requirements for the control and accountability of nuclear materials are imposed on the users of those materials. Therefore, when analyses are made by a laboratory to support a project such as the fabrication of nuclear fuel materials, various performance requirements may be imposed on the laboratory. One such requirement is often the use of qualified methods. Their use gives greater assurance that the data produced will be satisfactory for the intended use of those data. A qualified method will help assure that the data produced will be comparable to data produced by the same qualified method in other laboratories.

4.2 This guide provides guidance for qualifying measurement methods and for maintaining qualification. Even though all practices would be used for most qualification programs, there may be situations in which only a selected portion would be required. Care should be taken, however, that the effectiveness of qualification is not reduced when applying these practices selectively. The recommended practices in this guide are generic; based on these practices, specific actions should be developed to establish a qualification program.

5. Selection of Measurement Methods

5.1 *General:*

5.1.1 Before qualifying a method for a specific application, there should be assurance that the method has been properly selected for that application. The guidance given in this section can be used to assess the adequacy of the method's application. The guidance can also be used to select a new method when a new measurement capability is required within a laboratory.

5.1.2 Measurement methods generally can be classified as one of three types as follows:

5.1.2.1 Those published as national or international consensus standards,

5.1.2.2 Those established as acceptable for a specific application based on long-term and wide usage, and

5.1.2.3 Those having limited use, for example, those used only by a few laboratories or those that are relatively new.

5.1.3 For some applications, there is a choice available of two or more acceptable methods. In those cases, one method is usually recognized as the reference method, particularly if it is a published standard or if it is capable of producing the least bias and best precision.

5.1.4 The selection of a method should be based on the criteria in 5.2. In situations where a reference method and one or more acceptable methods are available, there should be no technical restrictions placed on which method is used.

5.2 *Recommended Practices for Method Selection:*

5.2.1 *Technical Basis*—The method should be based on sound technology. This means that proven laboratory and instrumental techniques are used in ways recognized and accepted by the community of users.

5.2.2 *Interferences*—The method should not be adversely affected by components in the matrix of the material to be analyzed. Knowledge about the method's limitations and about the composition of the material should be used to determine if the analysis will be affected by interferences. Other potential interferences such as environmental or electrical/electronic conditions should be considered in the selection process.

5.2.3 *Range*—The method should be capable of responding adequately across the range of concentration levels that will be encountered for the constituent to be measured. This requirement is most often of concern for methods used to measure impurities in materials since impurity concentrations may fluctuate to a greater extent than other constituents. It is important that the measurement technique used discriminates adequately between concentration levels encountered. The lowest concentration level that can be measured reliably should be clearly established (detection limit).

5.2.4 *Reliability of Method*—The method must be capable of producing data that will meet the bias and precision requirements established for the required analysis under the expected conditions of use. The requirements are usually

[7] The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this standard.

established by the user of the data and they should be based on the concentration levels of the constituents to be measured and on specification limits set for the constituents.

5.2.5 *Fitness for Purpose of Safeguards and Nuclear Safety Applications*—Methods intended for use in safeguards and nuclear safety applications shall meet the additional requirements specified in Annex A1.

6. Validation of Measurement Methods

6.1 There are occasions when it is desirable to investigate the applicability of a method to a particular use. This may be the case when the method has had limited use or it is being considered for a new or unique application. To provide some confidence that a qualification effort would be successful, it may be desirable to validate the application of the method. Validation is not a mandatory step in the selection and qualification process, but it can prevent wasted effort from attempts to qualify inadequate methods.

6.2 Validation of a method is usually done by an analyst under controlled conditions. Basically, validation involves investigating any or all of the selection criteria in 5.2. The intent is to define method capability and to determine if the method can be properly applied as intended. If modification of the method is required for it to be applicable, validation will provide the technical information needed for modification. Validation also provides the experience and information to write a detailed procedure if necessary. The result of the validation process will be either the rejection of a proposed method or confidence that it is acceptable for use as intended.

7. Qualification of Measurement Methods

7.1 *General:*

7.1.1 Although a method is selected based on the criteria in 5.2 of this guide, there is no assurance that a laboratory can actually obtain the performance expected from the method. In addition, there may not be sufficient assurance that the method is in fact adequate for its intended use. To provide those assurances, demonstration is included in the qualification process.

7.1.2 Qualification requires having a laboratory demonstrate that a method can produce acceptable data under specified conditions of qualification. Demonstration must be done under actual operating conditions and not under ideal test conditions. A specified material is analyzed to produce a specified amount of data. These data are evaluated by the person or organization that is responsible for approving qualification. The procedure established for demonstration should include provisions for handling failures in the demonstration and for repeating the demonstration should the method not be used for a specified period of time. Demonstration could also include producing other evidence such as appropriate literature references that the method is in fact applicable to the material to be analyzed.

7.2 *Recommended Practices:*

7.2.1 *Procedures*—The use of a method to make a laboratory measurement involves taking discrete actions in a specific order. Any change in an action or in the order may produce unsatisfactory data. To minimize potential problems, written, stepwise procedures should be provided within the methods. It is important that procedures are well-written, complete, and correct. They should receive technical and editorial reviews, and should be approved by appropriate management. Approval by the user of the data to be produced also may be required. Procedures prepared in accordance with Guide C1009 will meet these criteria.

7.2.2 *Method Performance Requirements*—To provide acceptable data, the method must be capable of meeting performance requirements for bias, precision, and range. Before a laboratory demonstrates its capability, these requirements should be clearly established (this should be done even before a method is selected for use; see 5.2). Specifications established for a process or material are the primary source of information on which the performance requirements are based. The performance requirements should be used to establish conditions required for qualification. Such conditions may require a statistically designed experiment to allow for other sources of variability such as the number of analysts or instruments, or both, as well as the concentration range of interest.

7.2.3 *Test Materials*—The material or materials that will be used for demonstration should be specified. The test materials should be as similar as possible to the material that will be analyzed. When possible, the composition or properties of test materials should be defined by measurements traceable to certified reference materials. See Guide C1128.

7.2.3.1 *Major Constituents*—When the method is to be used to determine a major constituent (for example, uranium in uranium oxide), a single test material may be specified. The concentration of the constituent in this test material should approximate the specification value established for the constituent in the material to be analyzed. The concentration value of the test material should not be given to the laboratory; only those responsible for evaluating the data and approving qualification should know the value (see 7.2.4.4). The calibration standard should be specified. See Guide C1156.

7.2.3.2 *Impurities*—When the method is to be used to determine an impurity, at least two test materials should be specified. One should serve as a test standard, meeting the same criteria given in 7.2.3.1 of this guide. Another should be used to demonstrate the detection limit of the method. When possible, the detection limit should be sufficiently below the specification limit to determine whether or not the concentration level of the impurity is within specification. Both test materials would serve to demonstrate the range of the method. When a method requires one or more standards for calibration, the calibration standard(s) that will be used should be specified. See Guide C1156.

7.2.4 *Qualification Requirements*—A procedure to be followed during demonstration should be established. The procedure that will govern qualification should include the following criteria:

7.2.4.1 *Bias*—A statistical sampling and hypothesis testing plan should be developed such that the risk of qualifying a method is acceptably small when the true bias exceeds the stated requirement and the risk of not qualifying the method is acceptably small when the true bias is zero. The plan would include the number of analyses of a test standard required to