

FORMAL COMPLAINT ^{r0}

A2LA

5202 Presidents Court
Frederick, MD 21703

Submitted via attachment to complaint filed through A2LA web portal

27 July 2020

1. PREAMBLE

Oxebridge Quality Resources International (Oxebridge) hereby issues this formal complaint filed against A2LA for alleged violations of ISO 17011 due to its relationship with the consulting body A2LA WPT.

NOTE: ISO 17011 allows access to the accreditation body's complaints process to any "interested party," which it then defines as, "*person or organization with a direct or indirect interest in accreditation.*" Oxebridge fulfills this role and thus submits this as an interested party to A2LA's accreditation activities.

2. HISTORY

Oxebridge operates an international ISO Whistleblower Hotline, which fields complaints and reports of accreditation violations from around the world.

In July of 2020, Oxebridge received a report that A2LA had spun out its training organization and was providing consulting for clients of A2LA. We later discovered this was not a secret action, but launched in 2019 by A2LA with appropriate marketing and transparency.

The whistleblower alleged, however, that A2LA was consulting for its own clients. Oxebridge then launched an investigation using public domain information and A2LA's own published marketing language.

Oxebridge believes that the creation of A2LA Workplace Training ("WPT") was not a violation of ISO 17011 itself, but the subsequent marketing and coordination between A2LA and WPT did result in multiple violations. These violations appear to have existed since the launch in 2019, and continue as of this filing.

It is worth pointing out key salient facts:

- A2LA and WPT share the same office building, but different suites. They do, however, share the same support office staff, such as reception. As we will show below, the two companies share nearly 20 other staffers as well.
- The CEO of WPT, Timothy Osborne, was previously A2LA's Director of Training. It appears that Mr. Osborne was the architect of the WPT spin-off.
- Because of this tightness, Mr. Osborne would have intimate knowledge of A2LA's operations, and thus insight into how to develop training and consulting programs that specifically benefit A2LA over its competitors.

3. ALLEGATIONS AND EVIDENCE

ISO 17011 clause 4.4 presents critical requirements for accreditation bodies such as A2LA related to impartiality. Without impartial exercise of accreditation assessments, the entire accreditation scheme loses its validity.

ISO 17011 clause 4.4.11 requires:

The accreditation body and any part of the same legal entity shall not offer or provide any service that affects its impartiality, such as:

a) conformity assessment activities covered by accreditation which include but are not limited to testing, calibration, inspection, certification of management systems, persons, products, processes and services, provision of proficiency testing, production of reference materials, validation and verification;

b) consultancy.

Clause 3.3.4 then defines “consultancy” as follows:

participation in any of the activities of a conformity assessment body subject to accreditation

EXAMPLE 1 Preparing or producing manuals or procedures for a conformity assessment body.

EXAMPLE 2 Participating in the operation or management of a conformity assessment body.

EXAMPLE 3 Giving specific advice or specific training towards the development and implementation of the management system, operational procedures and/or competence of a conformity assessment body.

Because WPT is technically a separate organization from A2LA – which was not proven one way or the other by Oxebridge – we can then rely on Clause 4.4.12 which requires:

In case the accreditation body is linked to a body offering consultancy or undertaking those conformity assessment activities mentioned in 4.4.11 bullet a), the accreditation body shall have:

a) different top management (see 5.7);

b) different personnel performing the accreditation decision-making processes (see Clause 5);

c) distinctly different name, logos and symbols;

d) effective mechanisms to prevent any influence on the outcome of any accreditation activity.

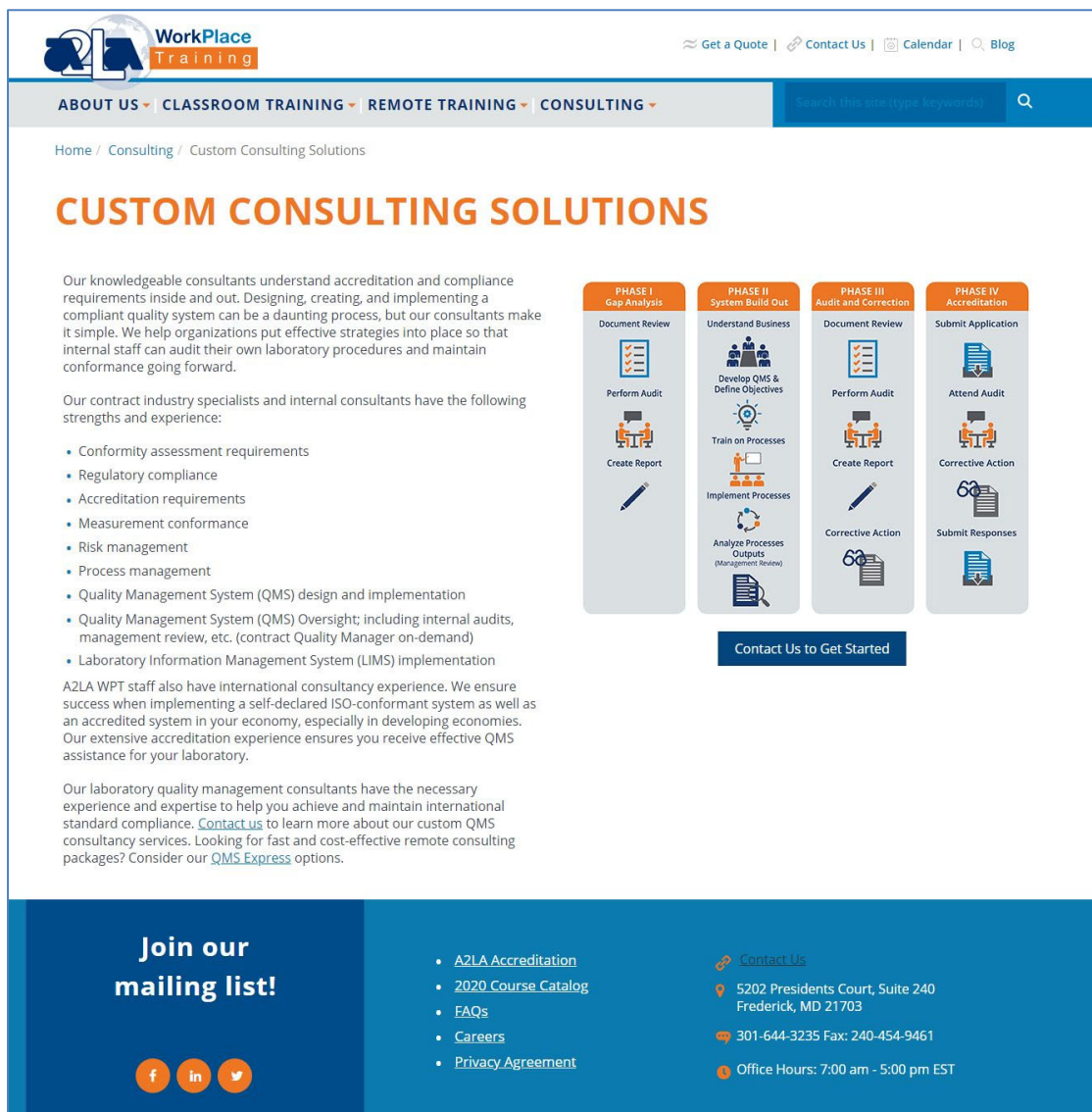
Clause 4.4.13 then goes further:

The accreditation body’s activities shall not be presented as linked with consultancy or other services that pose an unacceptable risk to impartiality.

Despite this, the WPT website clearly provides “custom consulting” services which overtly and irrefutably link the accreditation services of A2LA.

First, the WPT website provides a four-phase map of the consulting process. The first three phases consist of “custom consulting” (“Gap Analysis,” “System Build Out,” and “Audit & Correction”) followed by a fourth phase called, simply,

“Accreditation.” The latter refers to the accreditation audits normally done by bodies such as A2LA, but nowhere does the page indicate this is done by a third party.



WorkPlace Training | Get a Quote | Contact Us | Calendar | Blog

ABOUT US | CLASSROOM TRAINING | REMOTE TRAINING | CONSULTING

Home / Consulting / Custom Consulting Solutions

CUSTOM CONSULTING SOLUTIONS

Our knowledgeable consultants understand accreditation and compliance requirements inside and out. Designing, creating, and implementing a compliant quality system can be a daunting process, but our consultants make it simple. We help organizations put effective strategies into place so that internal staff can audit their own laboratory procedures and maintain conformance going forward.

Our contract industry specialists and internal consultants have the following strengths and experience:

- Conformity assessment requirements
- Regulatory compliance
- Accreditation requirements
- Measurement conformance
- Risk management
- Process management
- Quality Management System (QMS) design and implementation
- Quality Management System (QMS) Oversight; including internal audits, management review, etc. (contract Quality Manager on-demand)
- Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) implementation

A2LA WPT staff also have international consultancy experience. We ensure success when implementing a self-declared ISO-conformant system as well as an accredited system in your economy, especially in developing economies. Our extensive accreditation experience ensures you receive effective QMS assistance for your laboratory.

Our laboratory quality management consultants have the necessary experience and expertise to help you achieve and maintain international standard compliance. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our custom QMS consultancy services. Looking for fast and cost-effective remote consulting packages? Consider our [QMS Express](#) options.

PHASE I
Gap Analysis

Document Review

Perform Audit

Create Report

PHASE II
System Build Out

Understand Business

Develop QMS & Define Objectives

Train on Processes

Implement Processes

Analyze Processes Outputs (Management Review)

PHASE III
Audit and Correction

Document Review

Perform Audit

Create Report

Corrective Action

PHASE IV
Accreditation

Submit Application

Attend Audit

Corrective Action

Submit Responses

[Contact Us to Get Started](#)

Join our mailing list!

f in t

- [A2LA Accreditation](#)
- [2020 Course Catalog](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Privacy Agreement](#)

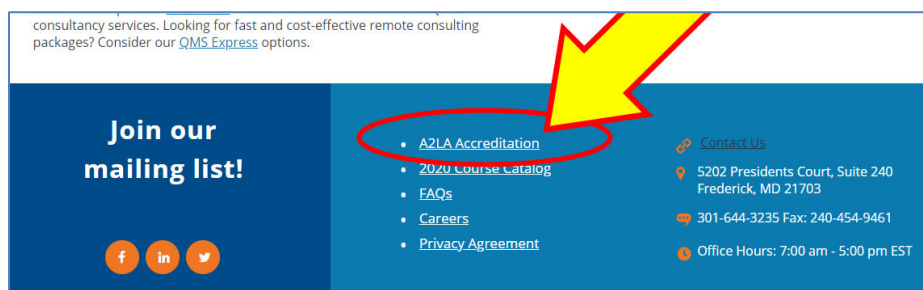
[Contact Us](#)

5202 Presidents Court, Suite 240
Frederick, MD 21703

301-644-3235 Fax: 240-454-9461

Office Hours: 7:00 am - 5:00 pm EST

Instead, the page includes a link at the bottom for “A2LA Accreditation” that resolves to the A2LA.org website. Any casual reader would understand that the consulting and accreditation are both being done by A2LA.



consultancy services. Looking for fast and cost-effective remote consulting packages? Consider our [QMS Express](#) options.

Join our mailing list!

f in t

- [A2LA Accreditation](#)
- [2020 Course Catalog](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Privacy Agreement](#)

[Contact Us](#)

5202 Presidents Court, Suite 240
Frederick, MD 21703

301-644-3235 Fax: 240-454-9461

Office Hours: 7:00 am - 5:00 pm EST

This same “four phase” graphic then appears in the official pricing documents sent to prospective leads, thus conflating the A2LA accreditation services with the consulting offerings by WPT.

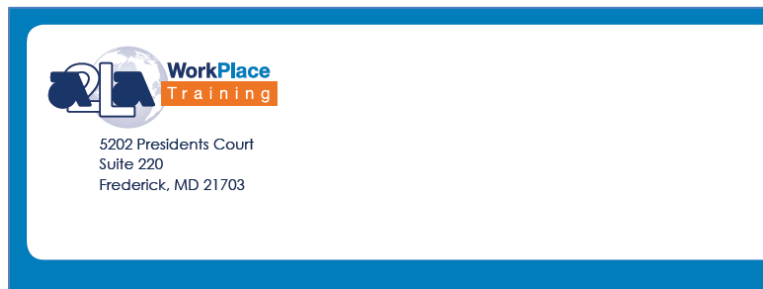
Whereas ISO 17011 is explicit in demanding that the “linked” body must have “*distinctly different name, logos and symbols,*” A2LA and WPT have not even bothered to attempt to comply with this clause. The logos and marks are identical in every way, with only the words “WorkPlace Training” laid over the A2LA logo:



The website of A2LA itself then links back to the website of WPT, closing the circle of conflict of interest.

The WPT page “FAQ” (located at <https://www.a2lawpt.org/faq>) appears to be largely copied and pasted from A2LA, and gives instructions on how to become an A2LA “member,” linking back to the A2LA page at <https://www.a2la.org/membership>.

The WPT downloadable document “2020 Course Catalog” located at https://mktg.a2la.org/l/273522/2019-12-16/3yxhfb1/273522/118710/20_21_A2LAWPT_TrainingCatalog_1_.pdf uses the address of A2LA, not WPT, with its final page indicating the address for WPT as “Suite 220” instead of Suite 240:



Neither website links to any of A2LA’s competitors, such as Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation or ANAB. Only the websites of A2LA and WPT are linked, in gross violation of ISO 17011.

The phone numbers for both organizations are answered by the same office exchange, and thus the same reception staff. The number for WPT was previously the office number for Mr. Osborne when he worked at A2LA, indicating the even the phone system remains shared. The two organizations have not attempted to install even the flimsiest firewall between them.

Ignoring the requirement that the two companies not share staff, WPT openly markets its use of A2LA staff. In its Course Catalog, the following personnel were all listed as “Instructors” while holding simultaneous roles in A2LA:

Name	A2LA Role	WPT Role
Beth Carbonella	Accreditation Director	Instructor
Bibi Abdullah	Accreditation Director	Instructor
Chris Gunning	General Manager, Accreditation Services	Instructor
Dan Tholen	Lead Assessor	Instructor
David Fricker	Accreditation Officer	Instructor
Dawn Mettler	Assessor	Instructor
Dr. Susan Audino	Assessor	Instructor
Heidi Phillips	Assessor	Instructor
Jane Weitzel	Assessor	Instructor
Jenna Schoettker	Accreditation Officer / Specialist	Instructor
Johanna Acuna	Assessor	Instructor
Kelly Black	Lead Assessor	Instructor
Lorena Villarreal	Assessor	Instructor
Marcela Shkolnik	Accreditation Officer	Instructor
Nick Slawson	Accreditation Officer	Instructor
Pam Wright	Calibration Accreditation Manage	Instructor
Rob Knake	Accreditation Manager, Calibration	Instructor
Scott Poore	Accreditation Officer	Instructor
Werner Schaefer	Assessor	Instructor

Of the 29 WPT instructors listed in the Catalog, 19 were found to be listed as current A2LA staffers and/or assessors, with some holding roles in senior management or in positions that would be expected to rule on matters pertaining to conflicts of interest. Not a single “instructor” within WPT was found to hold or have held a position within any other competing Accreditation Body. This nearly monolithic conflict ensures there would be no possible way A2LA could issue any accreditation certificate to a WPT client without raising a conflict of interest or having one of the WPT instructors forced to confront the conflict.

Next, in LinkedIn discussions with Christopher Paris, Tim Osborne made no attempt to hide the fact that WPT had offered consulting services to A2LA clients. During that discussion, he also admitted that there was a perception by “many” that there was a conflict of interest, saying, “*We don’t discriminate in the way many think we do.*” The revelation that WPT’s CEO was fully aware of the fact that “many think” there is a conflict of interest thus appears to provide evidence that A2LA has violated another clause of ISO 17011, 4.4.6:

The accreditation body shall have a process to identify, analyse, evaluate, treat, monitor and document on an ongoing basis the risks to impartiality arising from its activities including any conflicts arising from its relationships or from the relationships of its personnel. The process shall include identification of and consultation with appropriate interested parties as described in 4.4.5 to advise on matters affecting impartiality including openness and public perception.

If the CEO of WPT was aware of the perception of conflicts, and did nothing, this proves A2LA did not have a process to “*identify, analyse, evaluate, treat, monitor ... the risks to impartiality.*”

Because A2LA then has accredited the recipients of WPT’s “custom consulting,” it then violated clause 4.4.9:

When an unacceptable risk to impartiality is identified and which cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level, then accreditation shall not be provided.

Mr. Osborne admitted that work was being done to update the “branding” of WPT, but this is moot. Oxebrige argues that A2LA has been in open and overt violation of ISO 17011 since at least 2019, when the spin-off occurred.

4. CONCLUSION

Oxebridge formally requests that A2LA perform a proper and thorough investigation to identify the root cause of the problem identified herein. ***We ask that you do not constrain yourself only to the evidence indicated herein or to the ISO 17011 clauses listed, as further related evidence or violations may exist which you must discover.*** A copy of this complaint is being sent to ILAC and related bodies, and the issue will be escalated in the event that you do not properly respond, pursuant to IAF membership rules, or if your response is in any way lacking.

We furthermore request that, consistent with ISO 17011 clause 7.12.8, which requires “*the decision to be communicated to the complainant shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, individual(s) not involved in the activities in question,*” none of the named individuals names in this complaint process – in any way – anything to do with this complaint. We urge A2LA to utilize an independent committee or unrelated and impartial source to do so.

Because of the seriousness of the issue, and because A2LA calibration and test lab clients literally control equipment that can impact on the public’s safety and human health, we request that ***every accreditation certificate issued to any WPT client be treated as suspect, and re-assessed or transitioned to an accreditation body without a conflict of interest.***

Respectfully,



Christopher Paris
VP Operations