



UNDERSTANDING ISO 17025 CLAUSE 7.1 – REVIEW OF REQUESTS, TENDERS AND CONTRACTS

Understanding Client Requirements – Clarity Before Commitment

Every successful laboratory relationship begins with clarity. Clause 7.1 reminds us that before accepting any work, laboratories must ensure that client requests are fully documented, understood, technically feasible, and aligned with the lab's competence. This review process protects both the client and the laboratory by preventing misunderstandings and ensuring that expectations are realistic and measurable.

A thorough review includes:

- Confirming the **scope** of testing or calibration.
- Checking that **methods and standards** are appropriate and validated.
- Ensuring **resources and equipment** are available and capable.
- Identifying any **limitations or risks** that could affect results.
- Documenting the review for traceability and accountability.

When laboratories take time to clarify requirements, they build trust and demonstrate professionalism. It's not just about saying "yes" to a request—it's about saying "yes" with confidence, competence, and clarity.

Capability Assessment – Know Your Limits and Strengths

Clause 7.1 emphasizes that laboratories must only accept work they are competent to perform. This means assessing technical capability, equipment readiness, staff competence, and environmental conditions before committing to any contract.

A robust capability assessment ensures:

- The laboratory's **methods** are validated and suitable for the requested work.
- **Personnel** have the necessary training, competence and authorization.
- **Equipment** is calibrated, maintained, and traceable to national or international standards.
- **Facilities** meet environmental and safety requirements.

Accepting work beyond your competence risks nonconforming results and damages credibility. Laboratories that know their limits—and communicate them transparently—demonstrate integrity and impartiality.

Capability assessment is not a one-time exercise; it's a continuous process of evaluating readiness and maintaining confidence in every result produced.

Contract Clarity – Defining Responsibilities and Expectations

Contracts are more than paperwork—they are commitments to quality, impartiality, and transparency. Clause 7.1 requires laboratories to ensure that all terms and conditions are clear, documented, and agreed upon before work begins.

Key aspects of contract clarity include:

- Defining **responsibilities** for both client and laboratory.



- Specifying **methods, standards, and acceptance criteria**.
- Outlining **reporting formats and timelines**.
- Addressing **confidentiality and impartiality**.
- Documenting any **subcontracting arrangements**.

Clear contracts prevent disputes, protect impartiality, and ensure that both parties share a common understanding of what success looks like.

When laboratories communicate openly and document thoroughly, they reinforce confidence in their competence and professionalism.

Risk Evaluation – Preventing Non-Conforming Work

Clause 7.1 encourages laboratories to identify and evaluate risks before accepting work. This proactive approach ensures that potential issues—technical, logistical, or resource-related—are addressed early.

Effective risk evaluation involves:

- Reviewing **method suitability** and potential limitations.
- Assessing **resource availability** and scheduling constraints.
- Considering **client expectations** and communication clarity.
- Evaluating **impartiality risks** and conflict of interest.
- Documenting decisions and mitigation actions.

By integrating risk evaluation into the review process, laboratories safeguard their reputation and maintain confidence in their results.

Risk management is not about avoiding challenges—it's about anticipating them and responding with competence and control.

Communication and Confidence – Building Trust from the Start

Clause 7.1 closes the loop with communication. Once a request or contract is reviewed, laboratories must communicate acceptance, conditions, or limitations clearly to the client.

Transparent communication builds confidence and ensures mutual understanding. It includes:

- Confirming **acceptance or rejection** of the request.
- Explaining **limitations or special conditions**.
- Providing **timelines and reporting expectations**.
- Maintaining **records** of all communications for traceability.

When laboratories communicate openly, they demonstrate competence, impartiality, and respect for client needs. Confidence begins with clarity—and clarity begins with communication.



Clarity, Capability and Confidence from the Very Start

It's worth pausing to appreciate just how foundational this clause is to the entire ISO/IEC 17025 framework. Before a single sample is received, before a method is selected, before a result is issued — **the quality journey begins with the review of requests, tenders and contracts.**

The strength of a laboratory's technical output is directly linked to the strength of its **front-end decision-making**. When laboratories take the time to understand client needs, assess capability, clarify expectations, evaluate risks and communicate transparently, they set the stage for reliable, impartial and defensible results.

Key reflections:

Clarity is not optional — it is the first step toward competence.

Understanding what the client needs, what the test or calibration requires, and what the laboratory can realistically deliver is the foundation of every successful engagement. Ambiguity at the beginning becomes nonconformity at the end.

Capability assessment protects both the client and the laboratory.

Clause 7.1 demands honesty about resources, methods, equipment, personnel and environmental conditions. Accepting work outside your competence is not a sign of flexibility — it is a risk to impartiality, credibility and technical validity.

Contracts are commitments, not formalities.

Clear terms, defined responsibilities, agreed-upon methods and transparent conditions prevent misunderstandings and reinforce trust. A well-structured contract is a quality tool, not an administrative burden.

Risk evaluation is a proactive quality safeguard.

Identifying constraints, limitations, conflicts of interest or technical challenges early allows the laboratory to make informed decisions and avoid nonconforming work. Risk-aware laboratories are resilient laboratories.

Communication builds confidence long before results do.

Clients trust laboratories that communicate clearly, document decisions and maintain transparency. Confidence is not created at the end of the process — it is created at the beginning.

Clause 7.1 is more than a procedural requirement. It is a mindset: **Start with clarity. Proceed with competence. Deliver with confidence.**

Laboratories who master Clause 7.1 strengthen every downstream process — from method selection to reporting — because they begin with a solid, well-defined foundation.